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ABSTRACT

This curriculum unit on Navajo art consists of three lessons, each of which can stand alone or be used in conjunction with the others. Teacher and students will explore Navajo traditions in the unit and use the insight gained to create artworks that connect people to their community and natural environment. The key artworks provide the foundation upon which the Navajo art curriculum unit is based; extensive questions and answers given for each of the key artworks allow teachers and students to explore the pieces in depth. The unit's first lesson, "Weaving as a Way of Life," introduces students to Navajo culture and its artworld through weaving. In this lesson students analyze the ways design elements repeat to create patterns in Navajo weaving and make compositions based on the repetition of design elements. The unit's second lesson, "Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing," introduces students to the role of sandpainting in Navajo ceremonies and to the controversial use of sacred imagery in contemporary art. After learning about the sacred nature of sandpainting and its role in Navajo spiritual life, students consider the appropriateness of studying and making sandpaintings. The unit's third lesson, "Painting as Ceremony and Cultural Expression," leads students to explore the ways that Navajo artists have been influenced by their contact with the mainstream artworld. This lesson has students examine art which expresses painters' cultural and physical place in the world and make a painting expressing their own physical place in the world. The lesson plans offer resource listings--electronic, audiovisual, and print. (BT)

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How do artists draw inspiration from their traditions?

How does the environment inspire artists?

Can art be a way of life?

Should sacred images be used in contemporary art?

These are some of the questions you and your students can consider as you examine works by Navajo artists who have drawn inspiration from their Native American heritage in creating their artwork. You and your students will explore Navajo traditions and use the insight you gain to create artworks that connect you to your community and natural environment.

Lesson Plans: Overview and Recommended Sequence

Navajo Art: A Way of Life consists of three lessons. Each lesson can stand alone or be used in conjunction with the others. Be sure to read About Navajo Art to gain an understanding of the conceptual framework of the unit. The key artworks provide the foundation upon which the Navajo Art curriculum unit is based. Extensive questions and answers given for each of the key artworks allow teachers and students to explore the pieces in depth.

- **Weaving as a Way of Life** introduces students to Navajo culture and its artworld through weaving. Students will analyze the ways that design elements repeat to create patterns in Navajo weaving and will make compositions based on the repetition of design elements.

- **Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing** introduces students to the role of sandpainting in Navajo ceremonies and to the controversial use of sacred imagery in contemporary art. After learning about the sacred nature of sandpainting and its role in Navajo spiritual life, students will consider whether it is appropriate to study and make sandpaintings.

- **Painting as Ceremony and Cultural Expression** leads students to explore the ways that Navajo artists have been influenced by their contact with the mainstream artworld. Students will examine the art of painters who express their cultural and physical place in the world and will make a painting expressing their own physical place in the world.

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Credits and Acknowledgments

Faith Clover, visiting assistant professor in art education at Arizona State University (ASU), is the author of Navajo Art: A Way of Life.

Alan Jim, Dr. Clover's research partner and an art teacher at Greyhills Academy High School in Tuba City, AZ, proposed the original research ideas that led to this unit.

Artists Baje Whitethorne, Sr. and D. Y. Begay gave generously of their time to be interviewed for this unit and gave permission for their artwork be featured in the unit.

The Southwest Museum provided the artwork of Harrison Begay, and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County shared from its collection the two historical Navajo blankets. Their curators provided valuable background information on the artworks and gave an assessment of their current condition. Special thanks go to Dr. Margaret Hardin and Chris Coleman at the Natural History Museum, and Dr. Catherine Whitaker, Kim Walters, and Barbara Arvi at the Southwest Museum.

The sage wisdom of the following Navajo elders and spiritual leaders was invaluable in writing the sandpainting lesson: Daniel Peaches, Frank Isaac, Roy Walters, Sr., and Faye Tso. Their words were taken from the transcript of a Talking Circle on Navajo aesthetics that took place in February of 1997 through the generous funding of the Arizona Humanities Council. Artists Shonto Begay and Baje Whitethorne, Sr., were also part of these talking circles. Shonto translated the Navajo words of Faye Tso. Alan Jim developed the idea for the talking circles and led them with cultural advice from James Peshlakai, former cultural consultant for Greyhills Academy High School. The ideas communicated during these talking circles became the cultural and aesthetic foundation upon which these lessons are based.

Several teachers reviewed the lessons and offered valuable advice. These teachers are Danielle Emerick, formerly of Leupp Public School in Leupp, Arizona; Alan Jim of Greyhills Academy High School in Tuba City, Arizona; Carol Bartek of Wood Elementary School in Tempe, Arizona; and Christine Rose of Glendale, California.

Alfred Yazzie, Navajo language and culture teacher at Arizona State University, reviewed the lessons for cultural accuracy. In addition he and Suzanna Yazzie assisted in identifying websites relevant to the lessons.

Mary Erickson, professor of art at Arizona State University and conceptual director of

Worlds of Art, reviewed the lessons for content and form.

The following teachers taught activities form lessons and collected samples of student work that appear in the lessons: Alan Jim of Greyhills Academy High School in Tuba City, Arizona; Christine Rose of Glendale High School, Glendale, California; Carol Bartek of Wood Elementary School in Tempe, Arizona; and Christine Merriam of Kayenta Intermediate School, Kayenta, Arizona.

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The owners of Trails West Gallery in Laguna Beach were kind enough to spend time talking with the author about the reasons their patrons appreciate the work of Baje Whitethorne and other Native American artists.

Candy Borland, program officer at the Getty Education Institute, continues to understand the importance of providing teachers with appropriate curriculum that addresses the cultural makeup of the Los Angeles area.

Kathy Talley-Jones served as project manager. Madeleine Coulombe obtained image rights, and Gregory A. Dobie copy-edited the text.

Electronic and Other Resources

Internet

Note: Due to the dynamic nature of the Internet, some Web sites listed here may no longer be available.

Navajo Art and Culture

Maps

Navajo Weaving Styles and Navajo Nation
http://navajorugs.spma.org/map.html

Navajo Nation General Information

Dine College
http://crystal.ncc.cc.nm.us/

Navajo Today: Navajo and Native News
http://www.navajos.com/navajotoday/

Navajo Information and Links
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/larry_dilucchio/homepage.htm

Navajo Life and Culture
http://www.americanarts.com/nlifcult.htm

Desert Environment
http://www.desertusa.com/life.html

Historic Photographs / Northern Arizona University
http://www.nau.edu/~cline/speccoll/imagedb.html

Spider Rock Story
http://www.ilhawaii.net/~stony/lore38.html

Spider Rock Painting and Legend
http://www.ausbcomp.com/redman/Spider_Rock.htm

Churro Sheep
http://www.navajo-churrosheep.com/

Fred Harvey Company
http://www.heard.org/exhibits/inventingsw/index.html

Painting

Sage Brush: Baje Whitethorne
http://www.MichaelLacapa.com/

Baje Whitethorne
http://cowboyart.com/whitethrn.html

Harrison Begay
http://www.kiva-gallery.com/paintings/hbegay/hbegay.html

Dorothy Dunn and the Studio Style
http://www.collectorsguide.com/fa/fa044.shtml

Artwork by Dorothy Dunn's Students
http://www.ou.edu/fjjma/studio/.index.html

Weavers and Weaving

Historic Photo of Navajo Weaver
http://www.nau.edu/~cline/speccoll/images/phrames/547a.html

Historic Photo of Loom
http://www.nau.edu/~cline/speccoll/images/phrames/545a.html

Dye Chart
http://www.swjs.com/rugs/dc01.jpg

Chief-Style Blankets
http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/amerind/archive/exwoven4.htm

Chief-Style Blankets
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/T/navajo.html

Ganado Red Rug
http://www.swjs.com/rugs/rg04.jpg

Two Grey Hills Rug
http://www.swjs.com/rugs/rg03.jpg

Woven by the Grandmothers Exhibit
http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/amerind/archive/exwoven.htm

Hubbell Trading Post, Ganado, AZ
http://navajorugs.spma.org/

Miscellaneous Navajo Rugs
http://rainmaker-art.com/rainRug.html

Rug Styles
http://www.fourcorners.com/galleria/garlands/#Rugs

Biographies of Living Weavers
http://navajorugs.spma.org/weavers.html

Biography of Weaver Barbara Jean Teller Ornelas
http://www.westfolk.org/exhibits.weavers.html

Biography of Weaver Julia Armstrong
http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~lapahie/Julia.html

Betty Nelson: Personal History of Rug Weaver
http://www.math.utah.edu/~clemens/Stories/Betty.html

Fiber Art
http://www.fiberart.com

Other Artists and Artworks

Andy Goldsworthy
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/I/iris.html

Oscar Howe
http://www.huron.tie.net/Oscar/Paintings/Paintings.html

Mark Rothko
http://www.siu.edu/departments/cola/ling/glen_hpg/rothko.html

Mark Rothko
http://www.pacewildenstein.com/rothko/select.html

Frank Lloyd Wright
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/O/stained.html

Anasazi Art
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/V/storage.html

Buddhist Carving
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/S/mara.html

Cheyenne Shield
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/O/shield.html

Chinese Wedding Ensemble
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/T/wed.html

Egyptian Art
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/V/predy.html

French Cathedral and Rose Window, Notre Dame
http://www.ont.com/users/swanjones/notredam.htm

Greek Art
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/V/amphora.html

Korean Ceramic Pillow
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/O/pillow.html

Mayan Temples
http://www.halfmoon.org/bonampak.html

Persian Carpets
http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/Ecology/Lankford/carpet.html

Textiles as Art
http://www.collectorsguide.com/fa/fa035.shtml

Tibetan Mandalas
http://www.chron.com/content/interactive/voyager/mandala/detail/jformat.html

Audiovisual Resources

Echo Productions (1989). Separate Visions: Four Southwest Indian Artists. Flagstaff, AZ: Museum of Northern Arizona.

WETA (1997). Woven by the Grandmothers. Washington, DC: National Museum of Women in the Arts.

Computer Programs

Paint Programs for Mac-Painter Classic from MetaCreations; KidPix from Broderbund

Weaving Design Programs for Mac-Beadscape from Gigagraphics
http://www.gigagraphica.com/beadscape

Weaving Programs for Mac and Windows
http://www.avlusa.com

Print Resources

Archuleta, Margaret, and R. Strickland (1991). Shared Visions: Native American Painters and Sculptors in the Twentieth Century. Phoenix: The Heard Museum.

"Begay Scores Big with Japanese" (1990). Window Rock (AZ) Navajo Times, February 15, p. 1.

Bennett, Noel, and T. Bighorse (1997). Navajo Weaving Way: The Path from Fleece to Rug. Loveland, CO: Interweave Press.

Bernstein, Bruce, and W. J. Rushing (1995). Modern by Tradition: American Indian Painting in the Studio Style. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press.

Blomberg, Nancy (1994). Navajo Textiles: The William Randolph Hearst Collection. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Bonar, Eulalie (1996). Woven by the Grandmothers: Nineteenth-Century Navajo Textiles from the National Museum of the American Indian. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Bucklew, Joan (1967). "Begay Truly an Artist." Phoenix Arizona Republic, October 8, p. M-9.

Burchard, Hank (1991). "Baje Whitethorne." Washington Post, September 27, Weekend section.

Chase, Katherine (1982). "Navajo Painting." Plateau (Flagstaff: Museum of Northern Arizona) 54, no. 1.

Eaton, Linda (1989). "A Separate Vision." Plateau (Flagstaff: Museum of Northern Arizona) 60, no. 1.

Feest, Christian (1992). Native Arts of North America. New York: Thames and Hudson.

Garmhausen, Winona (1988). History of Indian Arts Education in Santa Fe. Santa Fe: Sunstone Press.

Hedlund, Ann (1992). Reflections of the Weaver's World. Denver: Denver Art Museum.

Hollister, Uriah (1903; reprint 1972). The Navajo and His Blanket. Glorieta, NM: The Rio Grande Press.

Howard, Kathleen, and D. Pardue (1996). Inventing the Southwest: The Fred Harvey Company and Native American Art. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing.

Jacka, Lois (1994). Enduring Traditions: Art of the Navajo. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing.

Kent, Kate (1985). Navajo Weaving: Three Centuries of Change. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

McCoy, Ronald (1988). "Summoning the Gods." Plateau (Flagstaff: Museum of Northern Arizona) 59, no. 1.

National Museum of the American Indian (1994). All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution (National Museum of the American Indian).

O'Bryan, Aileen (1993). Navajo Indian Myths. New York: Dover Publications.

Reichard, Gladys (1977). Navajo Medicine Man Sandpaintings. New York: Dover Publications.

Ripp, Bart (1988). "Eleven Painters Created a Treasure at Maisel's" Indian Trader (Albuquerque), March, p. 24.

"Sheepherder Became Artist" (1967). Gallup (New Mexico) Independent, August 9.

Wade, Edwin, and R. Strickland (1981). Magic Images: Contemporary Native American Art. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Willink, Roseann, and P. Zolbrod (1996). Weaving a World: Textiles and the Navajo Way of Seeing. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press.

Wykcoff, Lydia (1996). Visions and Voices: Native American Painting from the Philbrook Museum of Art. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Children's Books

Max, Jill, ed. (1997). Spider Spins a Story. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing.

Miles, Miska (1971). Annie and the Old One. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Oughton, Jerrie (1994). The Magic Weaver of Rugs. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Roessel, Monty (1995). Songs from the Loom: A Navajo Girl Learns to Weave. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications.

Whitethorne, Sr., Baje (1993). Monster Birds. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing.

Whitethorne, Sr., Baje (1991). Monster Slayer. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing.

Whitethorne, Sr., Baje (1996). Sunpainters: Eclipse of the Navajo Sun. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing.

Navajo Art A Way of Life

About Navajo Art: A Way of Life

Navajo Art: A Way of Life is a unit within the curriculum resource Worlds of Art. The unit consists of three lesson plans and information on key artworks that focus on Navajo art collected and displayed in the Los Angeles area.

Navajo Art uses a discipline-based approach to art education; the lessons are interdisciplinary, thematic, and inquiry based. Each lesson can stand alone or be used in conjunction with the others.

- Navajo Art Unit Theme
- Navajo Art Key Inquiry Questions
- Los Angeles Connections
- Interdisciplinary Connections
- Invitation to Contribute Student Work

Navajo Art Unit Theme

All cultures change over time.

Every culture has developed explanations of its history and beliefs. Sometimes these stories and ideas are written down; frequently, however, they take the form of unwritten stories, dances, artworks, and songs. Older members of a culture often share stories about their past. These stories help younger people understand the places their ancestors came from, the events that shaped their family histories, and how things in the culture have changed over time. The artwork of any group of people reflects, in many different ways, the history of that people and culture.

Art, like culture, changes over time.

Navajo Art Key Inquiry Questions

Navajo Art: A Way of Life addresses four key inquiry questions:

1. Art Maker: Who made the artwork? What are/were the circumstances of

the art maker's life?

2. Formal Organization: How do the elements in the artwork repeat? (For example, are parts repeated, balanced, emphasized, contrasted?)

3. Cultural Understanding: How was the artwork understood within the culture in which it was made?

4. Artworld Viewer: How did the person(s) for whom the artwork was made (for example, a patron, user, or other viewer of the time) understand it?

As students learn how to use these inquiry questions to guide their understanding, they can transfer that ability not only to guide their own art making but also to guide their viewing and reflecting on any artwork they might wish to understand more fully.

Los Angeles Connections

Many Native American people live in the Los Angeles area. These include descendants of California Natives who have traditionally lived in Southern California as well as Native Americans who moved to the area from all over the continent. Many Native Americans came to Los Angeles as part of U.S. government relocation programs designed to relocate young people from the reservations to urban areas so they could find employment and be integrated into mainstream culture.

Over the years, some Native American residents of Los Angeles have become assimilated into mainstream culture. They have not had the opportunity to learn about or participate in traditional practices and ceremonies that usually take place only on their home reservations. Some families and individuals travel back to their ancestral homes as often as they can to participate and remain connected to the land and the culture. But even those who do not participate in traditional practices have often been raised in ways related to the traditions of the culture from which they or their relatives came.

The artwork of Navajo artists, greatly admired by Americans of other ethnic backgrounds, has been collected and displayed in many museums and is available for purchase in numerous galleries in the Los Angeles area and across the country. Four of the key artworks in this unit are in the Los Angeles area. Two of the Navajo weavings can be found at the Museum of Natural History of Los Angeles County. The painting by Harrison Begay is in the collection of the Southwest Museum in the Highland Park area of Los Angeles; the one by Baje Whitethorne is in a private collection. Other of D.Y. Begay's weavings are represented in private collections in Los Angeles.

Interdisciplinary Connections

The main focus of this curriculum resource is learning about art. In addition, learning in a number of other content areas is addressed in specific lessons.

Weaving as a Way of Life relates to several areas within social studies, science, and math.

Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing relates to social studies and language arts.

Painting as Ceremony and Cultural Expression relates to social studies and language arts.

Invitation to Contribute Student Work

As you view the Navajo Art lesson plans, you will notice that samples of student work are available for some of the activities. Would you like to try one of the lessons and submit samples of your students' work?

Here's what to do:
Send a message to us at artsednet@getty.edu with a URL of the Web site where relevant lesson plans and student work are posted. We will link to them from the appropriate place in this unit.

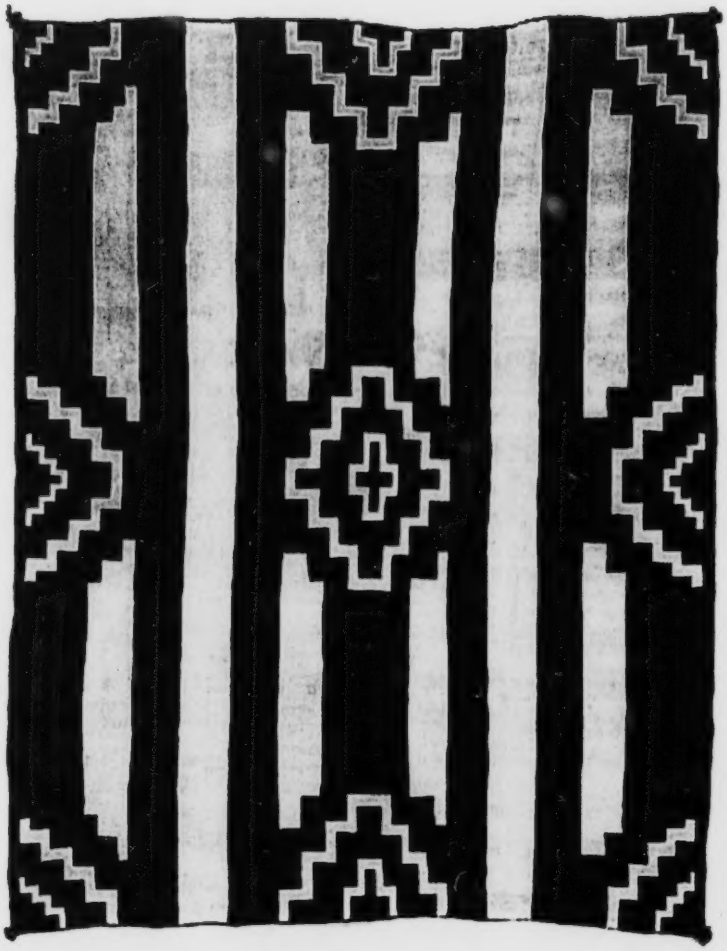
Key Artworks

The following key artworks provide the foundation upon which the Navajo Art curriculum unit is based. Extensive questions and answers given for each of the key artworks allow teachers and students to explore the artworks in depth.

- Two of the artworks, in the collection of a Los Angeles museum, are by unknown nineteenth-century artists;
- two pieces are by contemporary Navajo artists who live in Arizona and whose work is represented in galleries and collections in the Los Angeles area; and
- one composition is by an artist who also lives in Arizona and whose work is in museums in the Los Angeles area.

Navajo sandpaintings are explored in detail, but no examples are depicted out of respect for traditional Navajo beliefs.

- Anonymous, Chief-Style Blanket, Third Phase
- Anonymous, Pictorial Blanket
- D. Y. Begay, Going to London
- Sandpainting
- Harrison Begay, Navajo Horse Race
- Baje Whitethorne, Sr., The First Snowfall



Key Artwork: Chief-Style Blanket

Anonymous
Chief-Style Blanket (Third Phase)
Circa 1880-90
Weaving; cotton warp and wool weft
63 x 82 in.
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County: The William Randolph Hearst Collection

Navajo women have been weaving blankets for hundreds of years. It is an art learned from Spider Woman, the Navajo believe, or from their Pueblo neighbors, as some anthropologists say. Highly prized by the Navajo, these blankets were also traded for valuables with Native American peoples beyond the Southwest, the area in North America where the Navajo live. Examples of this particular type are called chief-style blankets, because only important people could afford to own them (the Navajo themselves have leaders rather than chiefs). No one knows who made this blanket, which is more than a hundred years old, but it shows a traditional Navajo design. The artwork was woven from commercially made yarn rather than wool produced from the weaver's sheep and dyed naturally.

Key Artwork: Chief-Style Blanket

Information about the Art Maker or Artwork

What can I find out about the art maker or artwork?

Art Maker

Who made the artwork? What were the circumstances of the art maker's life?

The weaver of this chief-style blanket was an unknown Navajo woman. Navajo women were and continue to be primarily responsible for weaving; it is an important role for them to fulfill. This art maker would have been taught to weave and given her weaving tools by her mother or grandmother. She would have raised sheep from which she got the wool used in the construction of her rugs and blankets. Weaving, from raising the sheep to selling the finished weaving, was a very important part of a Navajo woman's way of life.

Weaving was only a part of a Navajo woman's life, however, because she was free to weave only when the sheep were cared for, the crops tended to, the children watched after, and the family fed. It was a busy life from sunup to after dark. There were ceremonies to prepare for as well. The women had many responsibilities, including making most of the major decisions for the family.

Some men also were weavers. One example was the medicine man Hosteen Klah, who took up weaving in the early twentieth century. Some of these men were considered to be "special," having both strong male and female traits. Some men who weave today label their creations with their wife's or mother's name, because weaving is considered to be women's work. Although they do the weaving, male weavers depend on their female relatives for plant materials to use for dyes. Times are changing, though, and more men might be weaving in the future. There is currently a lot of interest in weaving among young boys.

Subject Matter

What subject matter (people, places, or things) does the artwork depict, if anything?

This weaving has no subject matter. It is a nonobjective design of bands and stepped diamonds. While some people have tried to give symbolic meaning to some of the designs in Navajo blankets, there is no agreement among weavers as to what these meanings would be.

Technical Features

How was the artwork made? (tools, materials, and processes)

Some anthropologists say that the Navajo adopted weaving from their Pueblo neighbors. The Navajo believe, however, that weaving came to them when, in the third underworld, Spider Man and Spider Woman taught the Holy People how to make a loom and then to weave. The Holy People brought these skills above ground for the Navajo. Weaving is thus a sacred activity; the stories that are told about Spider Man and Spider Woman are tools for teaching about weaving implements and processes. These skills are handed down from older women to younger ones.

This chief-style blanket was woven in a plain weave in a traditional Navajo way. It was produced on an upright vertical loom. The weaver's tools may have been given to her by an older female relative. These tools are highly prized. One is told never to put down or lose one's weaving tools, as they are part of one's identity as a weaver and to lose them would be to lose a part of oneself. They are protection against hard times and physical harm.

The warp threads of this weaving are cotton string that was commercially made. The weft threads, the ones by which the pattern is created, are commercial wool. When the weaver buys her yarn, rather than using her own, she saves a lot of time and effort. As a result, she can produce more rugs or blankets in a shorter period of time.

Once the warp threads, which hold the weaving, were strung on the loom, the weaver began to build the pattern by passing the weft threads over and under the warp. The design evolved as she wove. (For more detailed information on weaving, consult the weaving Web sites and books listed in Electronic and Other Resources.)

Sensory Elements

What visual elements do I see in the artwork? (line, color, shape, light and dark, texture, mass, and space)

The design of this blanket is a combination of bold lines of various colors and widths and parts of nine stepped diamonds. The colors—white, black, red, and purple—are traditional for this style of blanket. Because all the lines are straight, there is an overall geometric feeling to the design.

This type of blanket was originally meant to be worn, so the texture is fine and relatively soft. This causes the blanket to drape nicely about the shoulders of the wearer.

Formal Organization

How do the elements in the artwork work together? (For example, are parts repeated, balanced, emphasized, contrasted?)

There is a dramatic contrast of light, dark, and bright colors in this blanket. The design is symmetrical from top to bottom and side to side. Each quarter is a repeat of each of the other quarters. There is a central stepped diamond. Part of this diamond is repeated in each corner and in the center of each side of the blanket.

Reproduction

How is the reproduction (digitized or printed image) different from the original artwork? (size, angle of view, surface texture, etc.)

Viewing the original artwork, one can see the texture of the wool fibers, the fine strands of yarn, and the tightness and evenness of the weave, and sense the weight of the fabric.

The reproduction is a digitized image. A photograph of the blanket has been translated into pixels that can be transmitted over the Internet and viewed either on a computer monitor or printed out on a color printer. Depending on the quality of the monitor or printer, the image will be more or less true to the detail of the original but will not convey an accurate sense of the weaving's size or texture.

Condition

What condition (broken, restored, dirty) is the artwork in? How did it look when it was new?

This blanket was woven between 1880 and 1890, making it more than a hundred years old. It shows some wear but is in very good condition.

Contextual Information

What can I find out about when and where the artwork was made?

Natural Context

What is the natural environment like where the artwork was made? (for example, climate, landforms, natural resources)

For the most part, the Navajo Nation is comprised of high desert, where temperatures can shift from very hot to very cold over the course of a few hours. There is snow in the winter, but the sun usually melts it during the daytime. Spring storms bring

much-needed moisture to the land. In the summer it is quite dry and the wind can blow fiercely, raising clouds of red sand into the air. The altitude is above seven thousand feet. There are canyons and plateaus, mesas and washes. (See Electronic and Other Resources for links to maps of the Navajo Nation.)

Some Navajo move with their herds of sheep from high mesas to low canyons to take advantage of favorable weather conditions at different times of the year. Juniper, piñon, and sagebrush are the main plants, although other kinds can be found as well. These are used for medicines, for dyeing wool used in weaving, and for food. Rabbits, deer, mule deer, timber wolves, coyotes, and mountain lions live in close range. Beneath the mesas are coal and uranium, much prized by utility companies. These minerals generate income for the tribe but lie beneath grazing land and sites sacred to the Navajo people.

Functional Context

How is/was the artwork used?

Although this type of weaving is frequently called a chief-style blanket, this term is a misnomer, because the Navajo have leaders, not chiefs. Today, Navajo experts on weaving prefer the term "leader's blanket." Because such blankets were very valuable, not everyone could afford to have one. They were traded widely throughout the tribes of the Southwest and Central Plains. There were four phases, or periods of changing design, from a simple striped pattern to elaborate diamond motifs laid within the stripes.

This blanket was probably made to sell. It has a quite detailed and interesting pattern and a fine weave. The craftsperson probably would have taken it to a trading post and sold it to the trader for cash or credit to buy food, tools, and other things that were being shipped by railroad into the Navajo Nation. In this way the weaver could provide more for her family than it could raise or grow on the land.

In 1927 the blanket was acquired by the Fred Harvey Company's Indian Department from A. N. Johnson for $110. William Randolph Hearst purchased it for his collection of Navajo textiles sometime after that. Hearst was a very wealthy newspaper owner who collected art from all over the world. Many of his collections can be seen at his mansion, San Simeon, on the central coast of California. However, the Navajo textile collection was never shown there. Instead, he gave it to the Museum of Natural History of Los Angeles County, where it is preserved and exhibited for all to see and study.

Cultural Context

What can I determine about what people thought, believed, or did in the culture in which the artwork was made?

Traditional Navajo lived a particular lifestyle in the past; many continue to do so today. This lifestyle is based on the belief that they belong to the earth, not the other way around. They feel it is the responsibility of humans to protect the earth, to give back to it for everything taken from it. Traditional Navajo pray to the east each morning that they will have good thoughts and remain in harmony with their surroundings. The day is spent planting corn and squash and hoeing weeds. Food must be hunted, grown, or gathered with good intention. In earlier days there was less dependence on commercial products. People were more self-reliant. Families worked hard at home together.

At the time this blanket was made, there were no movies, televisions, telephones, or radios. People traveled a long distance by foot, horse, or wagon to visit neighbors, relatives, or the trading post. These trips might take many hours or days.

Women play a different role in Navajo culture than they do in many others. They are the caretakers, responsible for maintaining and passing down traditional values to the next generation. They make the important decisions. It is a matrilineal society, meaning that when a woman marries, her husband comes to live with her family on her land. He may bring some sheep, his horse, or his pickup truck, but the land and the herds and all important decisions relating to them are the responsibility of the woman. Children are born to the mother's clan. Women were, and still continue to be, important leaders in the Navajo world, and weaving is an essential element of their power.

Artworld Context

What can I learn about the art ideas, beliefs, and activities that were important in the culture in which the artwork was made?

As Navajo scholar Harry Walters points out about Navajo culture: "Art is not seen as separate from other cultural components like music, philosophy, religion, or history. To study Navajo art, one must study the whole culture. Any attempt to study Navajo art by itself would fail.

"Art in Navajo society is considered alive. It is like a person. It has feelings. It has power-healing power. This is something that a Navajo person learns; it is not something that you are blessed with or that you inherit. Like a person, your art has to accept you.

"Art must be approached with the right attitude, and, to maintain it, you must communicate with it or else it will disassociate itself from you.... To maintain good relations with art, there are ceremonies and prayers that you learn along the way, and you use these to renew your talent and to reestablish your relationship with art." (Bonar, 1996, p. 29)

With the coming of the railroad and tourists to the Southwest, there was a greatly expanded market for Navajo weavings. The railroad also brought jobs and

manufactured items not formerly available. As a result, weavers tried to fill the demand, to make money for their families. They heeded the advice of traders and produced new or adapted designs that would most appeal to the growing market.

Viewpoints for Interpretation

> What can I find out about what the artwork meant to people when and where it was made and what it means to people now?

Art Maker

Why did the art maker want the artwork to look the way it does?

This art maker was working in a traditional style. This weaving is a very dramatic and fine example of that style. Having gathered her yarns together, chosen her colors, warped her loom, and sang her songs, the art maker would begin to weave with a notion of what she wanted to do. However, the true and final design would evolve on the loom as she wove. The first half of the rug would be repeated in reverse when she reached the midpoint of the warp.

Artworld Viewer

How did the person(s) for whom the artwork was made (for example, a patron, user, or other viewer of the time) understand it?

With the arrival of the railroad in the Southwest in the late 1800s came middle-class tourists, who could travel to the area at a very reasonable cost. In conjunction with the Santa Fe Railroad, Fred Harvey opened a series of hotels and restaurants at intervals along the tracks. Here travelers could take a break from their journey, be assured of fresh food (brought out on the trains), and enjoy what was considered at the time the "exotic" scenery and people of the region. An interest in Native American artifacts such as pottery, baskets, jewelry, and weavings developed. Traders, seeing the possibilities of an expanded market, encouraged weavers to produce more goods. A craze for decorating with an "Indian look" spread across the country.

William Randolph Hearst, the most powerful and wealthy newspaper owner in America, was a collector of art from around the world. He displayed his holdings at San Simeon, his mansion on the central coast of California. Just after the turn of the century Hearst saw a collection of Navajo artifacts in Chicago. This inspired him to enthusiastically gather such objects, mainly through the Fred Harvey Company. The manager of its Indian Department, Herman Schweitzer, was his primary contact and advisor. From Hearst's letters to the company we know that he liked rarer and more interesting blankets. Some of these came from a special collection of weavings that was not for

general sale and included older, finer pieces such as this chief-style blanket.

Cultural Understanding

How was the artwork understood within the culture in which it was made?

"My grandmother calls these blankets 'leaders' blankets.' In the beginning they were probably just common everyday blankets, but then they evolved into a status symbol," says Wesley Thomas, co-curator of the Woven by the Grandmothers exhibition of the National Museum of the American Indian (Bonar, 1996, p. 112).

"Our people have seen enough photographs of them over the years to know that they were worn by respected people like Barboncito and Manuelito. The photographs were probably all posed, but, even so, this is what has been suggested to us," reports Kalley Keams, Thomas's cocurator (Bonar, 1996, p. 112).

Other Viewpoints

Are there other people's viewpoints you want to consider? If so, whose?

Many Americans would respond to the colors or the designs of this weaving and have less difficulty understanding it than contemporary painting, sculpture, or installations. Weavers would be interested in the Navajo weaving process and in the design. These weavers might be from Scandinavia, South American, Japan, or the Middle East, to name just a few places where the art of weaving is highly developed. Young people may be amazed to learn that Navajo preteen girls and boys learn to weave this way at home or school. Some students might have a hard time understanding that learning to weave is a valued skill for young women. (See Electronic and Other Resources for other viewpoints.)

Connections among Artworks

What can I find out about connections between this artwork and other artworks?

Style

How does this artwork look like other artworks?

The overall design of this artwork gives a strong feeling of dynamic repetition that is characteristic of all Navajo weaving and most other Navajo art.

The chief-style blanket is one of the most popular and persisting Navajo weaving designs. It evolved into a recognizable style in the nineteenth century. There were four

phases, referring to four distinctive shifts in style, during the century. These styles have appeared in variation throughout the twentieth century. Such blankets are greatly admired for their beauty and strength of design.

Influence

How did earlier artworks influence this artwork? How did/might it influence later artworks?

The early forms of this popular and persistent weaving style may have been drawn from pottery and basket designs or from design elements of sandpaintings. Some aspects of technique and style would have been borrowed and adapted from the weaving designs of neighboring tribes.

As tourists began to visit the Southwest on the Santa Fe Railroad and as catalogues of Indian items were distributed by mail nationwide, decorating in the Southwest style became very popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Weavings were ordered and shipped all over the country to fill the demand for this new style. Today the Southwest style of interior design is very popular again.

Themes

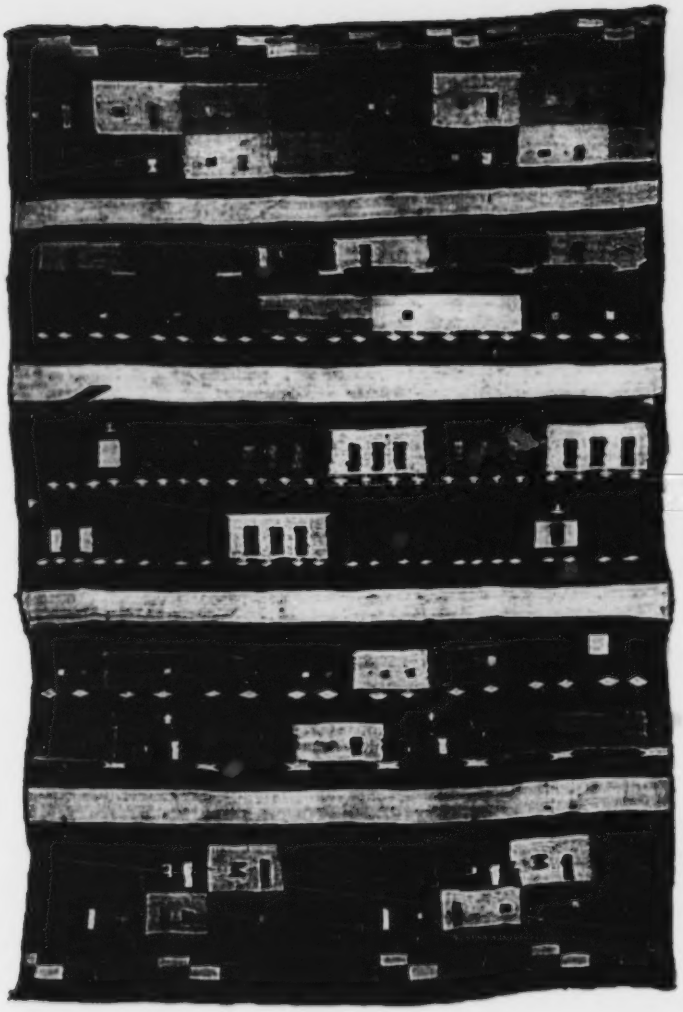
What general ideas help connect this artwork to other artworks?

One theme might be the refinement of design on objects formerly considered strictly functional such as:

- pottery (example: Storage Jar)
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/V/storage.html
- basketry
- clothing (example: Wedding Ensemble)
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/T/wed.html
- tools
- horse trappings
- doors (example: Doors to Faye Workshop)
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/Ecology/Seriff/doors.html
- furniture (examples: Model of Chair of Saint Peter, Pillow)
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/S/chair.html
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/O/pillow.html

and other useful objects have, in many times and places, been decorated to make them beautiful as well as functional. These objects sometimes have been elevated to the status of art.

This blanket has a very strong design. This interest in pattern over subject matter has been important in a variety of cultures and, most prominently, in modern formalist art.



Navajo Art A Way of Life

Key Artwork: Pictorial Blanket

Anonymous
Pictorial Blanket
Circa 1880-90
Weaving; wool warp and weft
82 x 56 in.
Museum of Natural History of Los Angeles County: The William Randolph Hearst Collection

In the 1880s the Santa Fe Railroad was built through Navajo lands. With the railroad came tourists, many of whom were interested in purchasing Native American objects as souvenirs of their travel. It became fashionable for non-Native people to have Indian weavings, baskets, and pottery decorating their homes. The unknown art maker who created this blanket probably wove it so that it could be sold to tourists. Such weavings showing recognizable images— "pictorial" blankets—were probably an innovation in the craftsperson's time, because most blankets were woven in abstract patterns. She made it using wool from sheep that her family raised; she and her family probably dyed the wool with plants and minerals they found near their home. The woman most likely wove it for cash or credit to buy food, tools, or other items shipped by railroad to traders in the Navajo Nation.

Key Artwork: Pictorial Blanket

Information about the Art Maker or Artwork

What can I find out about the art maker or artwork?

Art Maker

Who made the artwork? What were the circumstances of the art maker's life?

The weaver of this pictorial blanket was an unknown Navajo woman who lived in the last part of the nineteenth century. She wove this blanket sometime between 1880 and 1890. Navajo women were and continue to be primarily responsible for weaving. This art maker would have been taught to weave and given her weaving tools by her mother or grandmother. She would have raised sheep from which she got the wool used in the construction of her rugs and blankets. Weaving, from raising the sheep to selling the finished product, was a very important part of her life.

Weaving was only a part of a Navajo woman's life, however, because she was free to weave only when the sheep were cared for, the crops tended to, the children watched after, and the family fed. It was a busy life from sunup to after dark. There were ceremonies to prepare for as well. The women had many responsibilities, including making most of the major decisions for the family.

Subject Matter

What subject matter (people, places, or things) does the artwork depict, if anything?

This blanket depicts railroad trains. In the 1880s the railroad passed through Navajo lands, which prompted its inclusion as a subject for weavings. Notice the little engineers, the smokestacks, and the smoke details in the central band of the blanket. Some weavings included objects like hogans, people, and sheep, but the maker of this example may have felt that trains would appeal to both traders and tourists.

Technical Features

How was the artwork made? (tools, materials, and processes)

Some anthropologists say that the Navajo adopted weaving from their Pueblo neighbors. The Navajo believe, however, that weaving came to them when, in the third underworld, Spider Man and Spider Woman taught the Holy People how to make a

loom and then to weave. The Holy People brought these skills above ground for the Navajo people. Weaving is thus a sacred activity; the stories that are told about Spider Man and Spider Woman are tools for teaching about weaving implements and processes. These skills are handed down from older women to younger ones.

This pictorial blanket was woven in a plain weave in a traditional Navajo way. It was produced on an upright vertical loom. The weaver's tools may have been given to her by an older female relative. These tools are highly prized. One is told never to put down or lose one's weaving tools, as they are part of one's identity as a weaver and to lose them would be to lose a part of oneself. They are protection against hard times and physical harm.

The materials for constructing this pictorial were all made by the weaver or her family. The wool probably came from the weaver's own Churro sheep. After it was shorn from the sheep, the wool was cleaned and prepared for spinning by combing the fleece with carding combs. This removed remaining dirt and impurities and made the fibers fluffy and straight. Then, using a spindle, a disk on a long straight stick, the weaver spun the wool into yarn suitable for weaving. If the yarn was to be dyed, it was boiled in a pot containing plant materials known to make the desired colors. After dyeing, the wool was dried and readied for weaving.

The warp threads (the vertical threads over which the design threads are woven) of this pictorial are hand-spun wool. The weft threads (the ones that show on the surface of the weaving and by which the pattern is created) are also hand-spun. The yarn for this pictorial is rather coarse and lumpy. The colors white and brown are probably the natural wool colors. The red, orange, and green may have been produced by plants such as rabbitbrush, wild carrot, cedar, oak, and sage.

Once the warp threads were strung on the loom, the weaver began to build the pattern by passing the weft threads over and under the warp. The design evolved as she wove. For more detailed information on weaving, see resources listed in Electronic and Other Resources.

Sensory Elements

What visual elements do I see in the artwork? (line, color, shape, light and dark, texture, mass, and space)

The most prominent visual elements in this weaving are the bold lines and blocks of color that depict the train cars. The lines between the rows of cars are straight and vary only a bit in width. The cars are made up of rectangles of various sizes and colors. Details such as windows are also simple rectangles. The overall feeling is geometric. At each end of the rug is a band of blocks of alternating colors. These colors—brown, white, red, orange, and green—are commonly used in Navajo weaving.

Formal Organization

How do the elements in the artwork work together? (For example, are parts repeated, balanced, emphasized, contrasted?)

There is a strong sense of pattern in this rug that is created by the alternating bands of red and white with the bands of train cars. Starting from the bottom of the rug, there is first a narrow band of alternating color blocks, then a band of simple rectangles that may represent buildings, which is followed by a band of two trains. In the center of the rug are two trains led by engines, facing in opposite directions. Then the pattern reverses.

Reproduction

How is the reproduction (digitized or printed image) different from the original artwork? (size, angle of view, surface texture, etc.)

This pictorial rug differs in important ways from its reproduction. Viewing the original artwork, one can see the heavy texture of the wool fibers and the thick strands of yarn. Variations in the colors of the hand-dyed wools and the tightness and evenness of the weave are visible in the original.

The reproduction is a digitized image. A photograph of the blanket has been translated into pixels that can be transmitted over the Internet and viewed either on a computer monitor or printed out on a color printer. Depending on the quality of the monitor or printer, the image will be more or less true to the detail of the original but will not reflect its actual size.

Condition

What condition (broken, restored, dirty) is the artwork in? How did it look when it was new?

This artwork is more than 100 years old but is in very good condition.

Contextual Information

What can I find out about when and where the artwork was made?

Natural Context

What is the natural environment like where the artwork was made? (for example, climate, landforms, natural resources)

For the most part, the Navajo Nation is comprised of high desert, where temperatures can shift from very hot to very cold over the course of a few hours. There is snow in the winter, but the sun usually melts it during the daytime. Spring storms bring much-needed moisture to the land. In the summer it is quite dry and the wind can blow fiercely, raising clouds of red sand into the air. The altitude is above seven thousand feet. There are canyons and plateaus, mesas and washes. (See Electronic and Other Resources for links to maps of the Navajo Nation.)

Some Navajos move with their herds of sheep from high mesas to low canyons to take advantage of favorable weather conditions at different times of the year. Juniper, piñon, and sagebrush are the main plants, although other kinds can be found as well. These are used for medicines, for dyeing wool used in weaving, and for food. Rabbits, deer, mule deer, timber wolves, coyotes, and mountain lions live in close range. Beneath the mesas are coal and uranium, much prized by utility companies. These minerals generate income for the tribe but lie beneath grazing land and sites sacred to the Navajo people.

Functional Context

How is/was the artwork used?

This blanket, dating to about 1880-90, was probably made for sale to a trader. Even though it is loosely woven from thick and lumpy wool, it has a quite detailed and interesting design. The weaver may have had the idea that rugs depicting trains would be of interest to the tourists who were visiting the Southwest by this means of transportation. The weaver would have sold it to the trader for cash or credit to buy food, tools, and other things that were being shipped by railroad into the Navajo Nation. In this way the weaver could provide more for her family than it could raise or grow on the land.

This blanket was acquired by the Indian Department of the Fred Harvey Company, but there is no information about the date of purchase or any previous owners. The company had a collection of older rugs that was generally not for sale, except to very wealthy and influential clients. After 1905, William Randolph Hearst, the most powerful newspaper owner in America, began to collect Navajo weavings through the Indian Department and its manager, Herman Schweitzer. Hearst wished to amass a representative selection of Navajo items to display at San Simeon, his luxurious home on the central coast of California. However, he never displayed the collection, eventually donating it to the Museum of Natural History of Los Angeles County, where pieces such as this weaving are preserved, studied, and displayed.

Cultural Context

What can I determine about what people thought, believed, or did in the culture in

which the artwork was made?

Traditional Navajo people lived a particular lifestyle in the past; many continue to do so today. This lifestyle is based on the belief that they belong to the earth, not the other way around. They feel it is the responsibility of humans to protect the earth, to give back to it for everything taken from it. Traditional Navajo pray to the east each morning that they will have good thoughts and remain in harmony with their surroundings. The day is spent planting corn and squash and hoeing weeds. Food must be hunted, grown, or gathered with good intention. In earlier days there was less dependence on commercial products. People were more self-reliant. Families worked hard at home together.

At the time this blanket was made, there were no movies, televisions, telephones, or radios. People traveled a long distance by foot, horse, or wagon to visit neighbors, relatives, or the trading post. These trips might take many hours or days.

Women play a different role in Navajo culture than they do in many others. They are the caretakers, responsible for maintaining and passing down traditional values to the next generation. They make the important decisions. It is a matrilineal society, meaning that when a woman marries, her husband comes to live with her family on her land. He may bring some sheep, his horse, or his pickup truck, but the land and the herds and all important decisions relating to them are the responsibility of the woman. Children are born to the mother's clan. Women were, and still continue to be, important leaders in the Navajo world, and weaving is an essential element of their power.

Artworld Context

What can I learn about the art ideas, beliefs, and activities that were important in the culture in which the artwork was made?

As Navajo scholar Harry Walters points out about Navajo culture: "Art is not seen as separate from other cultural components like music, philosophy, religion, or history. To study Navajo art, one must study the whole culture. Any attempt to study Navajo art by itself would fail.

"Art in Navajo society is considered alive. It is like a person. It has feelings. It has power-healing power. This is something that a Navajo person learns; it is not something that you are blessed with or that you inherit. Like a person, your art has to accept you.

"Art must be approached with the right attitude, and, to maintain it, you must communicate with it or else it will disassociate itself from you.... To maintain good relations with art, there are ceremonies and prayers that you learn along the way, and you use these to renew your talent and to reestablish your relationship with art." (Bonar, 1996, p. 29)

With the coming of the railroad and tourists to the Southwest, there was a greatly expanded market for Navajo weavings. The railroad also brought jobs and manufactured items not formerly available. As a result, weavers tried to fill the demand, to make money for their families. They heeded the advice of traders and produced new or adapted designs that would most appeal to the growing market.

Viewpoints for Interpretation

What can I find out about what the artwork meant to people when and where it was made and what it means to people now?

Art Maker

Why did the art maker want the artwork to look the way it does?

We can only speculate that the weaver of this rug was excited by the arrival of the railroad and wanted to incorporate the train into her weaving. She was creating a new design while using traditional tools and processes.

Artworld Viewer

How did the person(s) for whom the artwork was made (for example, a patron, user, or other viewer of the time) understand it?

With the arrival of the railroad in the Southwest in the late 1800s came middle-class tourists, who could travel to the area at a very reasonable cost. In conjunction with the Santa Fe Railroad, Fred Harvey opened a series of hotels and restaurants at intervals along the tracks. Here travelers could take a break from their journey, be assured of fresh food (brought out on the trains), and enjoy what was considered at the time the "exotic" scenery and people of the region. An interest in Native American artifacts such as pottery, baskets, jewelry, and weavings developed. Traders, seeing the possibilities of an expanded market, encouraged weavers to produce more goods. A craze for decorating with an "Indian look" spread across the country.

William Randolph Hearst, the most powerful and wealthy newspaper owner in America, was a collector of art from around the world. He displayed his holdings at San Simeon, his mansion on the central coast of California. Just after the turn of the century Hearst saw a collection of Navajo artifacts in Chicago. This inspired him to enthusiastically gather such objects, mainly through the Fred Harvey Company. The manager of its Indian Department, Herman Schweitzer, was his primary contact and advisor. From Hearst's letters to the company we know that he liked rarer and more interesting blankets. He apparently let Schweitzer make decisions about what was the "best."

Schweitzer, in turn, worked with Lorenzo Hubbell, who was a trader on the reservation. The Hubbell Trading Post continues to operate as a National Park site at Ganado, Arizona.

Cultural Understanding

How was the artwork understood within the culture in which it was made?

Because weaving holds such an important place in the spiritual and cultural beliefs of the Navajo, weavers and their work are respected by the community. Most of the Native Americans who live in the Navajo Nation recognize the aesthetic qualities that make for fine weaving and admire good design and careful craftsmanship. Not only do they understand the process of weaving, they also know some of the stories, songs, and prayers that are important to the process.

According to Wesley Thomas, a Navajo weaver: "One of the first things that comes to mind when I see an old rug is that I wish I could hear the songs that were sung while it was being made. These rugs were empowered by the weavers. Weaving is like creating a living being, a child. When we take a rug off the loom we go through an emotional separation, but it was probably even harder for weavers during the period when this piece was woven." (Bonar, 1996, p. 98)

Some anthropologists say that the Navajo learned weaving from the Pueblo people. In that culture men do the weaving. Although women have traditionally been the weavers in the Navajo culture, in the early part of the twentieth century Hosteen Klah, a Navajo medicine man, agreed to weave re-creations of sacred sandpaintings. He had been creating other kinds of weavings for several years. Because he was considered to be a special kind of man-woman and, therefore, had unique gifts, he was able to weave. Today, Wesley Thomas is a man who weaves. He says that many men who weave sell their work under the name of their wife or mother. Although there are several well-known male weavers and there is growing interest in weaving among young men, it is still relatively rare for men to perform this activity.

Other Viewpoints

Are there other people's viewpoints you want to consider? If so, whose?

Many Americans would respond to the colors or the designs of this weaving and have less difficulty understanding it than contemporary painting, sculpture, or installations. Weavers would be interested in the Navajo weaving process and in the design. These weavers might be from Scandinavia, South American, Japan, or the Middle East, to name just a few places where the art of weaving is highly developed. Young people may be amazed to learn that Navajo preteen girls and boys learn to weave this way at home or school. Some students might have a hard time understanding that learning to

weave is a valued skill for young women. (See Electronic and Other Resources for additional viewpoints.)

Connections among Artworks

What can I find out about connections between this artwork and other artworks?

Style

How does this artwork look like other artworks?

This pictorial blanket, so called because it depicts recognizable objects, is like other Navajo weavings primarily in its strong design, symmetrically balanced pattern, natural materials, and color choices. Earlier pictorial blankets showed scenes of everyday life, such as hogans, mesas, and people herding sheep. Some weavers incorporated images of the Holy People and made reproductions of sandpaintings. These caused a great uproar among the traditional medicine men and elders.

Influence

How did earlier artworks influence this artwork? How did/might it influence later artworks?

Earlier pictorial blankets certainly gave this weaver ideas about depicting people and objects. Other banded rug designs that she had seen probably gave her ideas about good ways to organize the blocks of the pattern.

Even today some Navajo art makers specialize in crafting pictorial weavings. These usually depict everyday scenes. Some weavers continue to portray the Holy People in their work, but many others shy away from using sacred imagery out of respect for the power of the symbols and appreciation for Navajo traditions.

Themes

What general ideas help connect this artwork to other artworks?

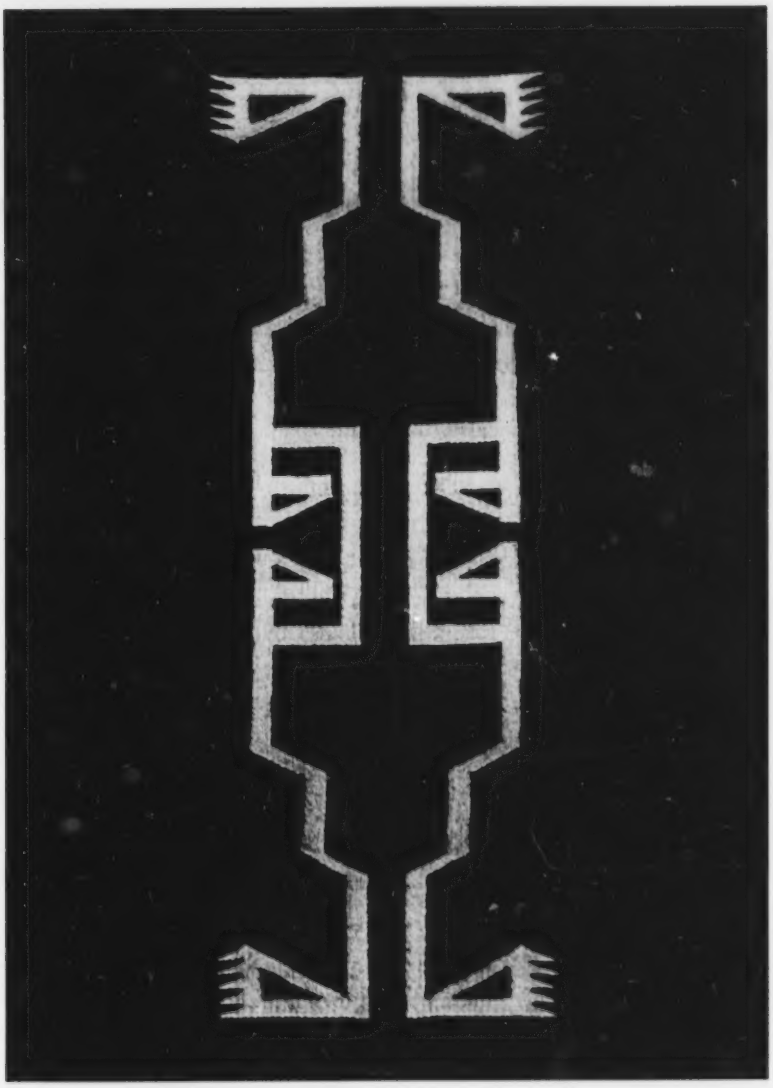
One theme might be the refinement of design on objects formerly considered strictly functional such as:

- pottery (example: Storage Jar)
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/V/storage.html
- basketry

- clothing (example: Wedding Ensemble)
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/T/wed.html
- tools
- horse trappings
- doors (example: Doors to Faye Workshop)
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/Ecology/Seriff/doors.html
- furniture (examples: Model of Chair of Saint Peter, Pillow)
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/Ecology/Seriff/doors.html
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/O/pillow.html

and other useful objects have, in many times and places, been decorated to make them beautiful as well as functional. These objects sometimes have been elevated to the status of art.

This rug has a very strong abstract design. This interest in pattern over subject matter has been important in a variety of cultures.



Key Artwork: Going to London

D. Y. Begay
(b. 1953)
Going to London
1997
Weaving; wool warp and weft
29 x 21 1/2 in.
British Museum of Mankind, London

"Practicing the art of weaving involves my views, my goals, my life. What I do as a wife, a mother, artist, business person, and community member, all ties in with my weaving," says contemporary Navajo artist D. Y. Begay (Bonar, 1996, p. 14). She uses traditional techniques in creating her weavings—raising sheep, shearing their wool, and coloring the wool using natural dyes. Although she created this weaving in London, where she was invited to be a guest artist at a museum, she brought along her loom, made by her brother from wood he obtained on the Navajo Nation, and all her own wool. The design, however, is not traditional, reflecting the freedom Navajo artists have to create innovative styles.

Key Artwork: Going to London

Information about the Art Maker or Artwork

What can I find out about the art maker or artwork?

Art Maker

Who made the artwork? What were the circumstances of the art maker's life?

D. Y. Begay, who is not related to painter Harrison Begay, was born in 1953 in the Navajo Nation at Ganado, Arizona. Her mother's clan is Totsohnii, the Big Water people; her father's, Ta'chii'n", the Red Streak Earth people. Memories of her childhood include the sky, the Lukachukai Mountains, and piñon trees. The Big Water people have always lived in this place, except for the time that D.Y. Begay's great-grandmother spent three years at Bosque Redondo, New Mexico. In 1863 many Navajo were taken away by the U. S. Army to this camp. Called the "time of fear" and also the "Long Walk," this was a period of great sorrow and hardship for the Navajo people. Begay's great-grandmother escaped and walked back to her ancestral land.

Begay says, "My first memory of a loom was when I was about five years old. My mother was weaving a pictorial rug.... Sometimes I would tag along when my mom gathered plants for making dyes.... But my only interest in weaving as a little girl was in watching my mother.

"My brother and I were taken away to Chinle (to boarding school) at about age six. I cried the whole way.... My first memory of the boarding school is that the dormitory aides wanted to cut our hair off.... I didn't get mine cut because I screamed! I really carried on. I was scared.

"At the end of every school year I was anxious to get home to my family.... It was also during the summers that I began to help my mother with her weaving, and each year I learned a little bit more. I made my first rug when I was about twelve years old. It took me almost all summer to weave, but it paid for a new dress for school.

"I spent my first year in college at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana.... In my sophomore year I transferred to Arizona State University, where I received my teacher's certificate. I began to focus on Navajo weaving, but I also wanted to explore other kinds of weaving, so I took fiber art classes.

"I am a Navajo woman—a Navajo weaver—but I also live in the Anglo world.... I spend the winter months outside Phoenix, where my husband, Howie Meyers, works and our son, Kelsey, attends school, but our home is in Tselani, west of Chinle.... I am most

comfortable living where I was raised. It's all a part of me and my weaving. Practicing the art of weaving involves my views, my goals, my life. What I do as a wife, a mother, artist, business person, and community member, all ties in with my weaving. I am a Navajo woman, with roots.... Sometimes it is difficult to manage all my different roles." (Bonar, 1996, p. 14)

Begay weaves every day for four to six hours. She has exhibited at the Indian market in Santa Fe, the Heard Museum in Phoenix, and numerous other shows and galleries in such cities as New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. She also cocurated Woven by the Grandmothers, a traveling exhibition of nineteenth-century Navajo textiles from the National Museum of the American Indian. She consults with various museums about their collections of Navajo artworks and is often asked to speak about and/or demonstrate weaving. Going to London was made during one such trip to London.

Subject Matter

What subject matter (people, places, or things) does the artwork depict, if anything?

This weaving has no specific subject matter. It is a composition of visual elements, including bold lines and strong, contrasting colors. The central motif resembles an abstract figure, but it was not intended to be one, according to the artist. Going to London, the title of the work, refers to the fact that the weaving was done for a museum in London, where Begay wove the artwork.

Technical Features

How was the artwork made? (tools, materials, and processes)

Going to London was woven in a plain weave using a traditional Navajo weaving technique. It was constructed on a four-by-three-foot upright vertical loom built from poplar. Begay's weaving tools were made by her brother Frank out of juniper, a native tree of the high desert area of northeastern Arizona, and from oak that was cut near Chinle. Some tools were handed down to Begay by her grandmother and mother.

Says D. Y. Begay, "Navajo weaving tools—the loom, batten, and comb—have a place and a purpose in Navajo origin stories. They were made by the Holy People for us to use. They are very precious, not only to women but also to medicine men, who may use a batten to smooth out the surface of a sandpainting in a healing ceremony." (Bonar, 1996, p. 19)

Most of the wool came from Begay's own Churro sheep (for more information about these sheep, see Navajo-Churro Sheep Association - http://www.navajo-churrosheep.com/). The Churro are a special breed of sheep that nearly became extinct but now

are being reintroduced in theNavajo Nation. The fleece of the Churro may be black, white, or brown; it is carded with carding combs until it is a soft and fluffy mass of fibers that is free of snarls and ready to spin into yarn. The various natural shades may be spun together in combinations to produce a whole range of browns and grays.

For Going to London, Begay chose to use her own dark brown and white hand-spun wool. The red wool was obtained from a commercial manufacturer in Sweden. The warp threads are also wool.

Sensory Elements

What visual elements do I see in the artwork? (line, color, shape, light and dark, texture, mass, and space)

The most prominent visual elements in this weaving are the simple, bold lines. The colors—deep brown, creamy white, red, and gray—are commonly used in Navajo weaving. The lines are angular and enclose or imply shapes that are triangular or geometric. The texture of the fibers appears smooth and soft yet has a certain rough prickliness.

Within the rectangle of the weaving there is a balance of line and shape against the dark brown background. Although the design is simple and bold, there is a variation of shapes in the negative space.

Formal Organization

How do the elements in the artwork work together? (For example, are parts repeated, balanced, emphasized, contrasted?)

The use of strong contrasts of color contributes to the bold design. Typical of Navajo weaving, the work is balanced horizontally and vertically along center lines. Each quarter of the weaving repeats the pattern of each of the other quarters. This design is not related to any of the traditional and regional Navajo styles, reflecting the fact that weavers have the personal autonomy to create innovative, new styles.

Reproduction

How is the reproduction (digitized or printed image) different from the original artwork? (size, angle of view, surface texture, etc.)

Viewing the original artwork, one can see the texture of the wool fibers, the fineness of the strands of yarn, and the tightness of the weave. Even the heaviness of the fabric can be approximated. Variations in the colors of the hand-dyed wools can be noted.

The reproduction is a digitized image. A photograph of the weaving has been translated into pixels that can be transmitted over the Internet and viewed either on a computer monitor or printed out on a color printer. Depending on the quality of the monitor or printer, the image will be more or less true to the detail of the original.

Condition

What condition (broken, restored, dirty) is the artwork in? How did it look when it was new?

Going to London is in new condition. It was finished in 1997 and looks exactly as it did on the day it was finished. Because it is in a museum, it will be cared for to ensure that it remains in fine condition.

Contextual Information

What can I find out about when and where the artwork was made?

Natural Context

What is the natural environment like where the artwork was made? (for example, climate, landforms, natural resources)

Going to London was made partly in London and partly in Begay's studio in Scottsdale, Arizona. These places have little to do with the artwork itself, except in the sense that Begay's designs show the influence of her travels and her exposure to the weaving of many different places.

Today the Navajo Nation shows many of the influences of the dominant culture: shopping centers, pizza parlors, satellite TV, a network of good paved highways, and gas stations that rent videos. The Navajo drive big pickups into town for supplies or for miles across the reservation to family gatherings, ceremonies, swap meets, and powwows. Yet many people live, as their ancestors did, close to and dependent on the land. Many live without indoor plumbing and haul water to their home from central

water supplies.

The intrusion of the modern world has had an impact on the land. Mining has left piles of tailings, great gouges in the earth, and contaminated ground water. Plastic shopping bags blow across the desert and catch on barbed wire fences and road signs. Contemporary mainstream technology and values have not always contributed positively to the Navajo culture and lifestyle.

Functional Context

How is/was the artwork used?

Going to London was woven for the British Museum of Mankind in London as part of an exhibition titled Rain. This exhibition was organized by the Heard Museum in Phoenix and showed the significance of rain to the Native American tribes of the Southwest. Begay was asked to do a weaving demonstration in London during the exhibition. The artwork was purchased by the British Museum of Mankind for its collection of North American Indian cultural items and is available for study and exhibition.

Cultural Context

What can I determine about what people thought, believed, or did in the culture in which the artwork was made?

Traditional Navajo people lived a particular lifestyle in the past; many continue to do so today. This lifestyle is based on the belief that they belong to the earth, not the other way around. They feel it is the responsibility of humans to protect the earth, to give back to it for everything taken from it. Traditional Navajo pray to the east each morning that they will have good thoughts and remain in harmony with their surroundings. The day is spent planting corn and squash and hoeing weeds. Food must be hunted, grown, or gathered with good intention. In earlier days there was less dependence on commercial products. People were more self-reliant. Families worked hard at home together. Now people drive to town to buy food and other products.

Women play a different role in Navajo culture than they do in many others. They are the caretakers, responsible for maintaining and passing down traditional values to the next generation. They make the important decisions. It is a matrilineal society, meaning that when a woman marries, her husband comes to live with her family on her land. He may bring some sheep, his horse, or his pickup truck, but the land and the herds and all important decisions relating to them are the responsibility of the woman. Children are born to the mother's clan. Women were, and still continue to be, important leaders in the Navajo world, and weaving is an essential element of their power.

One very important theme in Navajo culture is the respect for the autonomy of the

individual. No one has the right to speak for or to make a decision for another. That is considered rude and an invasion of privacy. The freedom to make personal choices, while maintaining one's role and responsibility within the family and community, remains central to Navajo life. Begay says, "We are taught as children not to point, stare, or be loud. We are a private people. It might be okay to be thought of as a teacher, but not to be labeled an expert, someone who knows it all." (Bonar, 1996, p. 18)

Artworld Context

What can I learn about the art ideas, beliefs, and activities that were important in the culture in which the artwork was made?

As Navajo scholar Harry Walters points out: "Art is not seen as separate from other cultural components like music, philosophy, religion, or history. To study Navajo art, one must study the whole culture. Any attempt to study Navajo art by itself would fail.

"Art in Navajo society is considered alive. It is like a person. It has feelings. It has power—healing power. This is something that a Navajo person learns; it is not something that you are blessed with or that you inherit. Like a person, your art has to accept you.

"Art must be approached with the right attitude, and, to maintain it, you must communicate with it or else it will disassociate itself from you.... To maintain good relations with art, there are ceremonies and prayers that you learn along the way, and you use these to renew your talent and to reestablish your relationship with art." (Bonar, 1996, p. 29)

Because the Navajo respect the autonomy of individuals, they respect the right of weavers to innovate and develop new designs, colors, and ways of working. "We always want to do a piece that will knock someone's socks off, but we don't verbalize it in public," says Begay (Bonar, 1996, p. 17). Weavers bring respect, money, status, and well-being to their family. Weavers can become leaders and spokespersons in the community.

Viewpoints for Interpretation

What can I find out about what the artwork meant to people when and where it was made and what it means to people now?

Art Maker

Why did the art maker want the artwork to look the way it does?

D. Y. Begay chose the colors of the wool that she wanted to use in the piece she was going to weave in London. She packed this wool, her weaving tools, and a small loom in her suitcase. She keeps a sketchbook of clippings from many sources and her own drawings that inspire her designs. Still, many of her designs are not preplanned at all. The one for Going to London evolved on the loom.

Begay is interested in the design of textiles from many different cultures and incorporates these influences in her work. She loves to experiment with color, dyeing her own wool and combining natural wools in innovative ways. In this way her weaving technique reflects traditional Navajo ideas about weaving, while her designs reflect her personal innovations.

Artworld Viewer

How did the person(s) for whom the artwork was made (for example, a patron, user, or other viewer of the time) understand it?

The British Museum of Mankind, which owns the artwork, considers it to be a fine example of contemporary Navajo weaving. Museum visitors who have little understanding of Navajo culture probably see it as a strong design, with careful craftsmanship. Others, who know more about the culture, most likely understand that even though the work departs from traditional design, the piece reflects time-honored Navajo weaving processes and cultural values.

Cultural Understanding

How was the artwork understood within the culture in which it was made?

Because weaving holds such an important place in the spiritual and cultural beliefs of the Navajo, weavers and their work are respected by the community. Most of the Native Americans who live in the Navajo Nation recognize the aesthetic qualities that make for fine weaving and admire fine design and careful craftsmanship. Not only do they understand the process of weaving, they also know some of the stories, songs, and prayers that are important to the process.

Other Viewpoints

Are there other people's viewpoints you want to consider? If so, whose?

Many Americans would respond to the colors or the designs of this weaving and have

less difficulty understanding it than contemporary painting, sculpture, or installations. Weavers would be interested in the Navajo weaving process and in the design. These weavers might be from Scandinavia, South American, Japan, or the Middle East, to name just a few places where the art of weaving is highly developed. Young people may be amazed to learn that Navajo preteen girls and boys learn to weave this way at home or school. Some students might have a hard time understanding that learning to weave is a valued skill for young women. (See Electronic and Other Resources for additional viewpoints.)

Connections among Artworks

What can I find out about connections between this artwork and other artworks?

Style

How does this artwork look like other artworks?

Going to London looks like other Navajo weavings primarily in its strong design, symmetrically balanced pattern, natural materials, and color choices. The weaving process used is the traditional one, although the design is not traditional. D. Y. Begay has, by exercising her Navajo spirit of autonomy, developed new motifs and patterns in her work.

Influence

How did earlier artworks influence this artwork? How did/might it influence later artworks?

Begay has been influenced by the many early Navajo weavings she has studied in museum collections around the country. She also has a strong interest in the weaving of other Native American tribes, South American people, and other cultures. Begay knows that through the workshops and demonstrations she has given that she is influencing younger weavers and passing on the traditions of her people and her own spirit of innovation.

Themes

What general ideas help connect this artwork to other artworks?

The strong design of this weaving relates to other art forms that are nonobjective in design. One could relate Begay's artwork to the paintings of Mark Rothko (these can be seen on Glenn Gilbert's ART page [http://www.siu.edu/departments/cola/ling/glen_hpg/rothko.html] and PaceWildenstein), for example. He was very interested in

minimal design and the interaction of color. Piet Mondrian worked with line and color blocks in his painting. Frank Lloyd Wright [http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet /Images/O/stained.html] used simple geometric shapes and lines to create stained glass windows. Andy Goldsworthy [http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images /Ecology/gallery1.html] uses natural materials in natural settings to create compositions that depend on strong line, color, and positive/negative spaces for their visual impact.

Another theme might be the refinement of objects formerly considered strictly functional. Pottery from Egypt, Greece, and the Anasazi has been decorated to make it beautiful as well as functional. Clothing, tools, horse trappings, and other useful objects have, in many times and places, been made more aesthetically pleasing with the addition of repeated motifs and patterns. These objects sometimes have been elevated to the status of art.

Key Artwork: Sandpainting

Note: Out of respect for the spiritual beliefs and practices of the traditional Navajo, a reproduction of a sandpainting is not furnished here.

Sandpaintings are made by Navajo medicine men (hataathli), also known as singers. These sacred artworks are essential parts of traditional Navajo ceremonies and play a central role in healing the mental and physical ills of the Navajo people. The works are used within the ceremonies and then destroyed. The designs of ceremonial sandpaintings have been reproduced in weavings, drawings, and permanent sandpaintings made of glue and colored sand on Masonite boards. They can readily be viewed in tourist shops, books, and on the Internet. None are presented here, however, because the medicine men with whom the author has consulted believe that it is improper to view sandpaintings outside the context of the ceremony in which they are used.

Information about the Art Maker or Artwork

What can I find out about the art maker or artwork?

Art Maker

Who made the artwork? What were the circumstances of the art maker's life?

Sandpaintings are made by Navajo medicine men (hataathli), who were raised in traditional ways. Typically they grew up in a hogan in the Navajo Nation, where living in harmony with the land and all its creatures became basic to their understanding of life.

The creation story of the Navajo people provides the foundation of their philosophy. According to the story, the traditional home of the Navajo, bounded by four sacred mountains, was given to them by the sacred beings known as the Holy People. The Navajo believe that this story, told and retold over the centuries, provides guidance for living in harmony (hozho) with all of nature. They believe that the world is full of good and evil forces and that people try to keep these forces in balance in their lives. Sometimes the evil forces take over and cause physical or mental illness. When an individual falls ill, or out of harmony, a ceremony must be done for the person. The particular ceremony depends on the nature of the illness.

A young man who is raised in the traditional way may be called upon by an older medicine man to help in a ceremony, perhaps in completing sandpaintings. The young man may show a gift for memorizing the long prayers and chants and re-creating the designs of the sandpaintings. He may show the spiritual qualities necessary for becoming a healer. An older medicine man will take on a younger man as an apprentice; after long years of training, the student will finally be prepared to lead a ceremony. The close relatives of medicine men are often good candidates to become shamans themselves.

The family who arranges a ceremony for an ill relative will pay the medicine man for his help. That payment used to be in goods, such as livestock or weavings; today he may be paid in cash. It is difficult for a medicine man to hold a wage-earning job with regular hours because of the demands of preparing for and conducting ceremonies.

Although medicine men are not what most people would think of as wealthy, they are rich in spirit, because they conduct a very essential and valued service to their communities. They carry the history and cumulative wisdom of their people and are responsible for communicating this learning to younger generations.

While men usually conduct the ceremonies in which sandpaintings are used, women perform other kinds of healing functions. They may be more expert in diagnosing illnesses and prescribing healing herbs.

Subject Matter

What subject matter (people, places, or things) does the artwork depict, if anything?

Sandpaintings depict the Holy People of the Navajo as well as important spiritual symbols and images. The Navajo word for sandpainting is 'iikaah (the place where the gods come and go).

Technical Features

How was the artwork made? (tools, materials, and processes)

Sandpaintings are made during the course of ceremonies, some of which may last as long as nine days. The artworks are made by a medicine man and his assistants, his apprentices, or even school-age children who have learned the technique. Everyone is encouraged to participate, especially males. Each ceremony has its own designs; some have dozens of different designs. These are created on a level bed of fresh sand in the center of a ceremonial hogan.

The pigments for the colors are made from natural materials. Ground gypsum, yellow

ochre, red sandstone, charcoal, and mixtures of these ingredients are the basis of the colors used. Pollen, cornmeal, and crushed flower petals are also employed. The colors are placed on bark dishes or, today, plastic plates or pieces of cardboard.

The colors have symbolic meaning. White is associated with the east and White Shell Peak, the eastern boundary of the traditional tribal land. Blue is the color of the south, the sky, and Blue Turquoise Mountain, the southern boundary of tribal land. Yellow represents the west, twilight, and the Yellow Abalone Shell Mountain, the western boundary. Black is the color of the north, darkness, and Black Coal Mountain, the northern boundary.

The sand is trickled between the thumb and forefingers in clear, fine lines to define the holy figures and sacred objects depicted in the painting. Controlling the accuracy of laying down the sand requires lots of practice. Designs are worked in the direction of the sun, from the east to the south to the west to the north and finally back to the east. The painting may be small in size and take only a short time to complete or may be up to twenty feet across and require many helpers and hours to complete. An average sandpainting is about six to eight feet across.

When the sandpainting is complete, the medicine man prays over the individual being healed. The patient will sit upon or touch parts of the painting. In this way he or she becomes identified with the Holy People, has harmony (hozho) restored, and begins the return to mental or physical health. At this point the sandpainting has served its purpose and is destroyed in the reverse order in which it was created. The materials are returned to the earth from which they came.

Sensory Elements

What visual elements do I see in the artwork? (line, color, shape, light and dark, texture, mass, and space)

Sandpaintings are flat, two-dimensional designs based on line and color. The primary colors are white, yellow, blue, and black. Other frequently used colors are brown, red, pink, and gray, all laid on a sand-colored base. Shapes of the figures are very abstract and stylized. They tend to be more angular and geometric than organic and curving. The texture of the sand and ground natural materials dictates the textural quality of the sandpainting.

Formal Organization

How do the elements in the artwork work together? (For example, are parts repeated, balanced, emphasized, contrasted?)

There are three basic ways in which sandpaintings are formally organized, each of

which results in a balanced design. First, figures may be arranged in a linear fashion on a baseline. Second, the arrangement may be radial, with figures grouped around a central point. (This is a very powerful arrangement, illustrating the Navajo concept of controlled dynamic movement.) The third arrangement is that of an enlarged central figure that dominates the composition. Most often there is some kind of surrounding border design that protects and isolates the figures in the sandpainting.

Reproduction

How is the reproduction (digitized or printed image) different from the original artwork? (size, angle of view, surface texture, etc.)

Out of respect for the spiritual beliefs and practices of the traditional Navajo, a reproduction of a sandpainting is not furnished here. Many reproductions are available in books, prints, and on the Internet. None of these reproductions can accurately represent the physical and spiritual setting in which the sandpainting is made, the texture of the sand and other materials used in the artwork, and the various sizes of the images.

Condition

What condition (broken, restored, dirty) is the artwork in? How did it look when it was new?

Sandpaintings are created during a healing ceremony. They are created anew each time a particular ceremony is performed and must be technically perfect in order to ensure that healing will take place. After the individual who is being healed has received the benefits of the sandpainting, the colored materials and sands are swept together and given back to the earth. The condition of the sandpainting as an artwork is never questioned.

Contextual Information

What can I find out about when and where the artwork was made?

Natural Context

What is the natural environment like where the artwork was made? (for example, climate, landforms, natural resources)

For the most part, the Navajo Nation is comprised of high desert, where temperatures can shift from very hot to very cold over the course of a few hours. There is snow in the winter, but the sun usually melts it during the daytime. Spring storms bring

much-needed moisture to the land. In the summer it is quite dry and the wind can blow fiercely, raising clouds of red sand into the air. The altitude is above seven thousand feet. There are canyons and plateaus, mesas and washes.

Some Navajos move with their herds of sheep from high mesas to low canyons to take advantage of favorable weather conditions at different times of the year. Juniper, piñon, and sagebrush are the main plants, although other kinds can be found as well. These are used for medicines, for dyeing wool used in weaving, and for food. Rabbits, deer, mule deer, timber wolves, coyotes, and mountain lions live in close range. Beneath the mesas are coal and uranium, much prized by utility companies. These minerals generate income for the tribe but lie beneath grazing land and sites sacred to the Navajo people. (See Electronic and Other Resources for links to maps of the Navajo Nation.)

Functional Context

How is/was the artwork used?

True sandpaintings are used for healing purposes. They retell in visual form portions of the Navajo creation story and the history of the Navajo and are believed to have the power to summon the Holy People to heal an individual at the ceremony during which the sandpainting is made.

In the early twentieth century, reproductions of sandpaintings in drawings and weavings were done at the request of anthropologists to make permanent records of the designs. Some weavers began to incorporate images of the Holy People in their textiles, causing an uproar at the time.

In the 1950s a European American couple came up with a way to make "sandpaintings" by gluing sand and colored materials onto pieces of Masonite. These have become popular items at Southwest gift and museum shops. The medicine men consulted by the present author believe that it is inappropriate and trivializing to Navajo culture to make and sell these objects. The process of gluing sand to boards to create artworks that do not use any sacred imagery is thought to be acceptable.

Cultural Context

What can I determine about what people thought, believed, or did in the culture in which the artwork was made?

Traditional Navajo people lived a particular lifestyle in the past; many continue to do so today. This lifestyle is based on the belief that they belong to the earth, not the other way around. They feel it is the responsibility of humans to protect the earth, to give back to it for everything taken from it. Traditional Navajo pray to the east each morning that

they will have good thoughts and remain in harmony with their surroundings. The day is spent planting corn and squash and hoeing weeds. Food must be hunted, grown, or gathered with good intention. In earlier days there was less dependence on commercial products. People were more self-reliant. Families worked hard at home together. Now people drive to town to buy food and other products.

Traditional stories still told during the wintertime convey the history of the Navajo (or Dine, as the people call themselves) and the right ways to conduct one's life. Stories guide weavers in the proper ways to undertake their weaving; stories guide potters in the correct ways to make pottery. The people are reminded of the cycles of the seasons, of the sun, and of life. There are four seasons, four directions, and four sacred mountains. The number four and the circle play important roles in the beliefs and practices of the Navajo.

Artworld Context

What can I learn about the art ideas, beliefs, and activities that were important in the culture in which the artwork was made?

Art-making activities are so much a part of Navajo life that they are hard to describe separate from the culture itself. The concept of harmony (hozho) is the foundation of Navajo philosophy. One always strives to be in harmony with the earth, with other people, and within one's own thoughts and actions. Creating beautiful things according to the proper ways set out in Navajo stories is part of nearly every family's activities. For example, small children draw. They help to gather the plants for dyeing wool, to herd the sheep that provide the wool, and to shear the wool from the sheep. Family members may make jewelry or work metal for beautiful horse trappings. Crafting and selling art objects has become a major source of income for many Navajo families.

Viewpoints for Interpretation

What can I find out about what the artwork meant to people when and where it was made and what it means to people now?

Art Maker

Why did the art maker want the artwork to look the way it does?

The Navajo believe that sandpaintings, originally given by the Holy People, must be re-created with great accuracy by medicine men in order to ensure the effectiveness of the healing ceremony.

Artworld Viewer

How did the person(s) for whom the artwork was made (for example, a patron, user, or other viewer of the time) understand it?

The primary person for whom a sandpainting is made is the patient, who understands that this image contains the power of the Holy People, which can restore him or her to mental and/or physical health. The beauty of the image lies in its careful craftsmanship and accuracy in design. The guests at the ceremony, family and invited friends, also understand the sandpainting to have healing powers that may benefit them as well.

Cultural Understanding

How was the artwork understood within the culture in which it was made?

For the traditional Navajo, whether in the past or today, sandpaintings are understood to represent the stories of the creation and history of the Navajo people. The Navajo believe that the world contains both good and evil forces. Because these forces occasionally get out of balance, people become ill in mind or body. Since the Holy People have experienced the same dangers and diseases that people today experience and have found ways to restore harmony (hozho), undergoing a specific ceremony for a diagnosed affliction can bring the Holy People's experience of healing to the patient. Those who believe are cured and returned to a state of harmony; evil forces are again under control.

Most medicine men are very adamant in their assertions that sandpaintings have such strong power that viewing them has the potential to harm the onlooker. In fact, pregnant women are not allowed to view sandpaintings, as they could pose a potential threat to the future health of the mother and child. Many artists agree and refuse to use images of the Holy People or re-creations of sandpaintings in their work. Some artists who do use these images believe that changing parts of the likenesses and having prayers and ceremonies said will provide protection from potential harm.

Even if they do not practice traditional ways, many Navajo would feel reluctant to use images of the Holy People or sandpainting designs because of the belief that they carry sacred meaning and great power. However, there may be a range of opinions about the propriety of making reproductions of sandpaintings for commercial purposes. Some would say that making permanent sandpaintings is a good way to earn a living. Others would say that when certain parts of the image are altered, the sandpainting no longer has the power to harm or heal.

Other Viewpoints

Are there other people's viewpoints you want to consider? If so, whose?

Many tourists admire the commercial sandpaintings that are available in trading

posts and gift shops and want to take home a reminder of their trip to the Navajo Nation. Because they may not understand or appreciate the sacred nature of real sandpaintings, they willingly purchase these imitations, thereby trivializing the value of important cultural symbols.

Some people may not respect religious and cultural beliefs that differ from their own. They may think of Navajo ideas about the Holy People and their role in healing as mere superstition and might dismiss sandpaintings as the creations of primitive people.

Many people in the mainstream culture would defend an artist's right to use any imagery or art form for the purpose of personal expression. These people would find the restriction on re-creating or interpreting sandpaintings as a violation of the artist's freedom to appropriate and use any idea or image he or she chooses. However, when people in the mainstream culture defend Western ideals of artistic freedom, they perpetuate the idea that all imagery can be appropriated. The beliefs of a culture are what make that culture distinct. The trivialization of those beliefs and the images that embody those beliefs represent a kind of cultural destruction. When cultural objects are viewed only as aesthetic objects, they are stripped of their essential cultural meanings.

Connections among Artworks

What can I find out about connections between this artwork and other artworks?

Style

How does this artwork look like other artworks?

Medicine men and traditional Navajo believe that each particular sandpainting design was originally dictated by the Holy People and must be re-created for each ceremony as accurately as possible. Therefore, it can be expected that sandpaintings resemble each other more closely than they resemble any other kind of artwork.

Influence

How did earlier artworks influence this artwork? How did/might it influence later artworks?

Actual re-creations of sandpaintings associated with particular healing ceremonies were made by medicine men for early anthropologists and other scholars of Navajo religion. These drawings and weavings were reproduced in books as a permanent record of the ephemeral sandpaintings. The weavings of Hosteen Klah are preserved in the collection of the Wheelwright Museum in Santa Fe. There was a common belief that the Navajo

culture would be assimilated into mainstream American culture and that the traditional ceremonies would vanish forever unless they were preserved for eternity.

Sandpaintings have had several important influences on Navajo artwork. The Studio style taught by Dorothy Dunn at the Santa Fe Indian School in the 1930s resembles the flat, two-dimensional design of sandpaintings. The imagery and adaptations of it have been appropriated for use in permanent sandpaintings produced for the tourist trade. The figures appear in weavings and in the work of some contemporary Navajo artists.

Themes

What general ideas help connect this artwork to other artworks?

Special symbols and imagery are common to the religions of most cultures.

- sculptures of Buddha (example: The Buddha as Conqueror of Mara) http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/S/mara.html
- mandalas of colored sand made by Tibetan monks
- Christian symbols and figures in the medieval stained glass windows of Notre Dame (example: Notre Dame)
- reliefs on the walls of Mayan temples (example: Bonampak on the Halfmoon site) http://www.halfmoon.org/bonampak.html

Such images communicate to believing members of the culture important stories and spiritual beliefs of that culture. While religious imagery in most cultures takes a permanent form and is not considered harmful to the viewer, Navajo sandpainting is different in this regard. The prevailing beliefs of traditional medicine men about the power of these images need to be respected in order to understand and appreciate the culture.

Key Artwork: Navajo Horse Race

Navajo Art A Way of Life

Harrison Begay
(b. 1917)
Navajo Horse Race
1936
Painting; watercolor on paper
21 x 10 3/4 in.
Southwest Museum, Los Angeles

As a small boy, Harrison Begay left his home in the Navajo Nation to attend an Indian boarding school, where he heard English for the first time and was not allowed to speak Navajo. He remained away from Navajo lands, entering the Santa Fe Indian School in 1934 at age seventeen. While there, he painted Navajo Horse Race, which he sold to a collector for twelve dollars. The work recalls the rhythms and colors of Navajo weavings, but its style is that of Dorothy Dunn, who influenced a generation of Indian artists while teaching at the school and did much to promote their work. She encouraged her students to paint tribal scenes in a colorful, flat style that appealed to collectors. Begay, who today lives near his childhood home, is one of the five most influential artists trained by Dunn, and his work continues to be popular, especially in Japan.

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Key Artwork: Navajo Horse Race

Information about the Art Maker or Artwork

What can I find out about the art maker or artwork?

Art Maker

Who made the artwork? What were the circumstances of the art maker's life?

Harrison Begay, who is not related to weaver D. Y. Begay, is a Navajo artist who was born in 1917 at White Cone, near Keams Canyon, Arizona. This area is high desert, a fairly flat, open, and barren land. He was raised in a traditional way, residing in a hogan. His family herded sheep and goats for a living. At Keams Canyon, north of his home, there was a famous trading post where his family probably traveled to trade wool for foodstuffs and manufactured goods. However, most of what the family needed they found or raised on their own land. A trip to the trading post was a long journey by horse and wagon.

Begay's family spoke only Navajo. Early in this century the U.S. government felt it was important for Navajo children to learn English and the "civilized" ways of the European Americans. In 1887 Congress had passed the Compulsory Indian Education Law and built boarding schools across the country, including on the Navajo reservation. Children were picked up from their homes and taken by government agents to the schools, where speaking Navajo was not allowed. The youths were given American-style clothing and lived in dormitories under very harsh conditions. For children used to beingsurrounded by family, with loving adults to teach and nurture them, living in close quarters with many other children under the supervision of adults who were not related, not Navajo, and not always kind and loving was a terrifying experience.

When he was about eight years old Begay left home to attend such a boarding school, where he heard English for the first time. In 1934, when he was seventeen, he entered the Santa Fe Indian School. Here he was able to study with Dorothy Dunn and Geromina Montoya. Dunn had created an art education program at the school that proved to be a major influence on young Indian artists. In 1936, while a student of Dunn's, Begay painted Navajo Horse Race. He sold the work that same year to Charles Mc C. Reeve for twelve dollars. It is now in the collection of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles.

Begay graduated in 1939 and later studied architecture at Black Mountain College in North Carolina on a scholarship from the Indian Commission. He served as a muralist in the Works Projects Administration, a major program that hired artists to create public works during the Depression. Although the location of these murals is not known,

beginning in 1939 Begay did help paint the famous murals that can still be seen at Maisel's Trading Post in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Ripp, 1988). After serving three years in the U.S. Army in Europe and Iceland during World War II, he returned to civilian life. He has worked as a full-time painter ever since.

In 1946 Begay received a purchase award at the first Indian Annual painting competition at the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This was one of the first and most prestigious competitions meant exclusively for Indian artists and was instrumental in promoting the fine art of Native Americans. During the 1950s Tewa Enterprises in Santa Fe was established by Begay and others to make and sell reproductions of their artwork. This was one of the first Indian-owned art reproduction businesses.

Because so many of his childhood and young adult years were spent off the reservation, Begay did not have a deep understanding of his religious and ceremonial heritage. During the 1950s, however, while seeking a new creative stimulus, he was introduced to an early book on Navajo legends by the artist Don Perceval. This filled him with curiosity about traditional Navajo ceremonies, which became the subject of his paintings. He records a way of life that is thought by many to be vanishing.

Begay has struggled all his life with alcoholism. Often he has sold his work for far less than its value in order to meet immediate needs for money. This has kept prices for his work low overall. His life has not been an easy one. Still, Begay is internationally recognized, having received a major French award in 1954. His art is included in almost every exhibition and publication on Indian painting. His works are in the permanent collections of major museums all over the world, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of the American Indian in New York City and the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles.

In 1990 Begay was invited to Japan to show his work. He took forty-five works and sold them within three weeks. His work has been compared to oriental painting (Bucklew, 1967), which may explain its popularity with the Japanese.

In 1995 Begay received the Native American Masters Award from the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. In 1997 he was named an Arizona Indian Living Treasure for his lifelong contributions in cultural arts and traditions. Although his eyesight is failing, he still paints a couple of hours a day. Currently he is living in Greasewood, Arizona, near his birthplace.

Subject Matter

What subject matter (people, places, or things) does the artwork depict, if anything?

Navajo Horse Race depicts seven racing horses and their Navajo riders. There is a

minimal background. The riders race across the white paper upon which they are painted.

Technical Features

How was the artwork made? (tools, materials, and processes)

Harrison Begay used watercolors on white watercolor paper to paint Navajo Horse Race. It is a small painting, so he would have utilized a variety of fine brushes in order to create the level of detail seen in the figures. He applied the paint using a minimum amount of water in order to create opaque colors. The artist employed fine contour lines to outline the horses and riders, then filled in the areas with solid flat colors. This is characteristic of the Santa Fe Studio style promoted by Dorothy Dunn.

Sensory Elements

What visual elements do I see in the artwork? (line, color, shape, light and dark, texture, mass, and space)

The fine lines that outline the figures are uniform in width. These lines are organic and curving and serve to define the forms. The stylized shapes of the horses and riders stand out against the negative shapes created by the white spaces of the paper showing between the horses and riders. The outlined forms are filled in with color. The colors Begay used are primarily earth tones of different shades of brown. The riders are dressed in earth tones, gray blue, and dull red and sit on saddle blankets in these same earth tones. The overall effect reflects the variety of natural colors one sees on the reservation. The darker values contrast with the white of the background.

Formal Organization

How do the elements in the artwork work together? (For example, are parts repeated, balanced, emphasized, contrasted?)

Many features of the painting are repeated. Each of the seven horses and riders is a variation of the basic form. The repetition is not static, however. Each horse assumes a different position: head up, head down, rearing, lunging. The riders look forward, look backward, look sideways, checking the position of their opponents in the race. The horses each overlap to show some minimal depth of field. As they overlap, they create a very rhythmic sense of movement across the picture plane from left to right. This sense of movement is an important reflection of Navajo philosophy that things are always in motion in order to remain in balance. Adding to the dynamic rhythmic movement is the subtle variation of earth colors among the horses and their riders and the varied spacing among the horses.

Reproduction

How is the reproduction (digitized or printed image) different from the original artwork? (size, angle of view, surface texture, etc.)

Viewing the original artwork, one can see the texture of the watercolor paper, the transparency of the paint, and the fine lines that define details in the painting. The reproduction is a digitized image. A photograph of the painting has been translated into pixels that can be transmitted over the Internet and viewed either on a computer monitor or printed out on a color printer. The original is 21-by-10 3/4 inches; the size of the reproduction is variable. The colors of the reproduction vary somewhat from the original, depending on the fidelity of the colors on the transparency from which the computer image was made and on the quality of the monitor or printer being used.

Condition

What condition (broken, restored, dirty) is the artwork in? How did it look when it was new?

Navajo Horse Race is matted to 29-by-18 3/4 inches with white mat board. It is stored in a portfolio in the archives of the Southwest Museum and is in good condition.

Contextual Information

What can I find out about when and where the artwork was made?

Natural Context

What is the natural environment like where the artwork was made? (for example, climate, landforms, natural resources)

Harrison Begay grew up on the desert plains of the Navajo Nation. The colors of the landscape and the everyday and ceremonial activities of the Navajo have been the inspiration for his artwork. But, for much of his early life, Begay was working from his memory of these places and people as he learned to paint in the accepted "traditional" style of the Santa Fe Indian School Studio under Dorothy Dunn.

Functional Context

How is/was the artwork used?

Dorothy Dunn did much to promote the art of her Indian students. She collected and

exhibited their work and, as a result, brought a great deal of attention to their creations. Navajo Horse Race was painted in 1936 at the Santa Fe Indian School and was bought by a collector of Indian art that same year.

Begay has earned much of his income from his art throughout his life. The art was made to sell and has been purchased by people who value the artwork for its craftsmanship and aesthetic value as well as its representation of the traditional ways of life of the Navajo.

Cultural Context

What can I determine about what people thought, believed, or did in the culture in which the artwork was made?

Navajo culture is founded on a philosophy based on the concept of hozho (harmony). The Navajo language has no word for art; all of life represents a kind of art.

Traditional Navajo believe that they belong to the earth, not the other way around. They feel it is the responsibility of humans to protect the earth, to give back to it for everything taken from it. Traditional people pray to the east each morning that they will have good thoughts and remain in harmony with their surroundings. In this way an individual protects himself or herself from mental and physical illness. When an individual falls ill, a ceremony needs to be done under the guidance of a medicine man (hataathli). Begay paints these ceremonies and the everyday activities of people.

Begay grew up in a world that was quite different from the Navajo world of today. There were no pickup trucks, shopping centers, televisions, or telephones on the reservation. The people were primarily self-sufficient. They grew and gathered plants used for food, medicine, and dyes for wool and tended their herds of sheep.

At the time Begay was a young boy, herds were growing very large, many numbering in the thousands. Horses, important to successful control of the herds, were valuable possessions. Each morning the sheep were taken out of their corrals and driven out to graze. Sheepherding was the nucleus of the economy. The wool was used to spin yarn for weaving; the weavings were taken to a trading post to barter for flour, canned goods, tools, and other supplies that could not be made at home. These goods had been introduced with the coming of the railroad.

Artworld Context

What can I learn about the art ideas, beliefs, and activities that were important in the culture in which the artwork was made?

Art-making activities are so much a part of Navajo life that they are hard to describe

separate from the culture itself. The concept of harmony (hozho) is the foundation of Navajo philosophy. One always strives to be in harmony with the earth, with other people, and within one's own thoughts and actions. Creating beautiful things according to the proper ways set out in Navajo stories is part of nearly every family's activities. For example, small children draw. They help to gather the plants for dyeing wool, to herd the sheep that provide the wool, and to shear the wool from the sheep. Family members may make jewelry or work metal for beautiful horse trappings. Crafting and selling art objects has become a major source of income for many Navajo families.

Viewpoints for Interpretation

> What can I find out about what the artwork meant to people when and where it was made and what it means to people now?

Art Maker

Why did the art maker want the artwork to look the way it does?

Harrison Begay learned to paint in the style he was taught at the Santa Fe Indian School art studio. His teacher, Dorothy Dunn, believed that her Indian students should paint scenes from their own tribes. She felt that the imagery should be decorative, flat, and colorful, reminiscent of designs on pottery, tepees, shields, early ledger paintings, and other Indian objects. She thought it necessary to keep her students free of influences that might be introduced if they studied art in the Euro-American style. Still, the lessons she gave her students closely resemble those of any basic art class. Her influence during her five years of teaching in the Studio resulted in a style that defined a "traditional" Indian manner of painting. Her successor, Geromina Montoya, continued to teach in Dunn's model for the next twenty-five years.

Begay is one of the five most prominent Navajo artists trained in Dunn's studio. He said of his art: "Having obtained the ideals from my art training I find that my tribal art is well worth preserving. I believe Indian art should be characterized by the same styles and effects which our forefathers developed. In my paintings I preserve the adaptation of the characteristics of my tribal art. I am greatly interested in the sandpaintings, examples of the most highly developed painting of my own tribe" (Wyckoff, 1996, p. 79).

Artworld Viewer

How did the person(s) for whom the artwork was made (for example, a patron, user, or other viewer of the time) understand it?

In the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s the Studio style was very popular among art collectors and patrons of Indian art. The prevailing belief was that this was "authentic" Indian

painting. There was a huge demand for exhibitions of art from Dorothy Dunn's students. This created a broad market for their paintings and defined the market for Indian art.

The artwork was made for the non-Indian art market. Each artist was encouraged to use subject matter from his or her own culture; Begay got his inspiration from the ceremonies and everyday activities of the Navajo. The narrative nature of the subject matter helped the non-Indian to understand the life of the artists. For many people, this artwork was a nostalgic record of a lifestyle that was considered to be in decline. The art was collected, traded, exhibited in museums and galleries, and displayed in homes. Navajo Horse Race was bought by a collector, Charles Mc. C. Reeve and later donated to the Southwest Museum as a good example of Begay's painting.

Cultural Understanding

How was the artwork understood within the culture in which it was made?

Then and now, Navajo people rarely purchase Navajo art. They admire Begay's ability to make a living selling his creations and appreciate the subject matter of his work. Some people have emulated his style.

Other Viewpoints

Are there other people's viewpoints you want to consider? If so, whose?

Today there is controversy about Dorothy Dunn's influence over her students. She gave little encouragement for the development of new and innovative styles that might have incorporated the artists' own original ideas or reflected mainstream directions in art. Some Indian artists began to feel that their expression was limited by the style. In the 1960s the American Indian Art Institute replaced the Indian School Art Studio and encouraged individual creativity that reflected more contemporary mainstream art ideas. The Studio style was dubbed the "Bambi" style for its flat and decorative elements and nostalgic subject matter.

Today the work of Harrison Begay and other Studio artists is appreciated from a more historical viewpoint for its aesthetic qualities and narrative subject matter. "Harrison is very big right now in Japan," said Terry Billiman, his agent. "The interest in Japan stems from the fact that Harrison's style is similar to the kind of art done by Japanese painters" (Navajo Times, 1990). According to the same article, "Art dealers in Phoenix are now saying that a Begay painting may be the best investment a person can make right now in Navajo art because of his age and the interest from the Japanese" (Navajo Times, 1990).

It might be interesting to learn how Begay's images of ceremonies and inclusion of sacred images are viewed by traditional Navajo and their cultural and spiritual leaders.

Young people might enjoy the storytelling nature of the artwork and learn about Navajo culture through viewing Navajo Horse Race and other artwork by Begay.

Connections among Artworks

What can I find out about connections between this artwork and other artworks?

Style

How does this artwork look like other artworks?

This artwork, with its flat, two-dimensional style, contour outlining, and use of solid colors without modeling or perspective, depicts the everyday activities of the Navajo people. It is a characteristic example of the Santa Fe Indian School Art Studio style. Many other student artists from this school employed the same style and similar subject matter. These individuals include the Navajo artists Gerald Nailor, Fred Kabotie, Andrew Tsihnahjinnie, Quincy Tahoma, and Narcisco Abeyta.

Influence

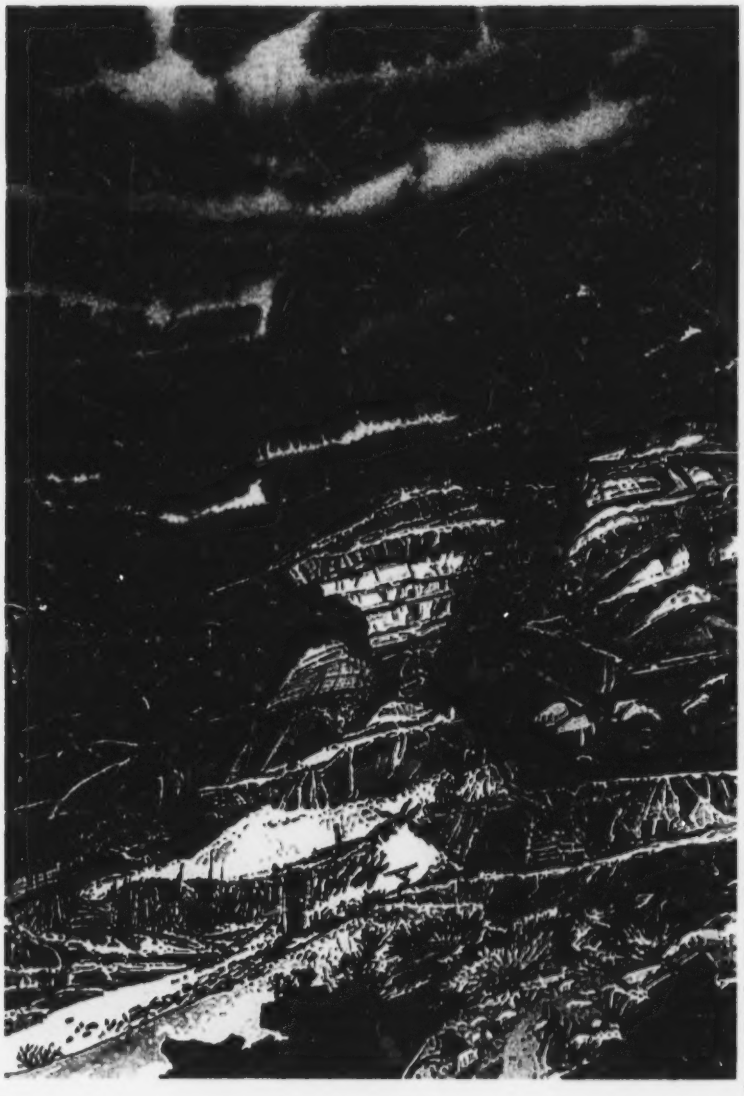
How did earlier artworks influence this artwork? How did/might it influence later artworks?

This artwork was based on the ideas of Dorothy Dunn. She felt that native artists should base their designs on pottery and textile patterns of ancient Native Americans. She discouraged the use of perspective, shading, or any other attempt to show three-dimensional form. She provided illustrations of acceptable and unacceptable techniques and introduced students to historic art forms from the Laboratory of Anthropology. The historian J.J. Brody said of her: "Through the Santa Fe Studio, Miss Dunn became the single most influential individual for an entire generation of Indian painters. The Studio became the model for art departments at other Indian Schools, and no significant changes in methods or philosophy occurred until thirty years after she had begun her work. Virtually all of the important Indian painters of her generation came under her guidance or were taught by her students, and in turn they taught most Indian artists of the succeeding generations." (Bernstein and Rushing, 1995) Charlie Lee, another Navajo painter, said, "I studied the painting of artists whose work was prominent: Quincy Tahoma, Gerald Nailor and Harrison Begay." (Wyckoff, 1996).

Themes

What general ideas help connect this artwork to other artworks?

Artists all over the world have used their skills to record or tell stories about their people. We can learn a lot about life in a distant time and place by looking carefully at the narrative art created there. Artworks like Navajo Horse Race help us to see the kinds of activities that Navajo people engage in for work, fun, and ceremony. As we view the artworks of Navajo artists from different times, we can see how the changing culture and circumstances of life are reflected in the changes in the artworks. (See Electronic and Other Resources for links to more information on Navajo art and artists.)



Navajo Art A Way of Life

Key Artwork: The First Snowfall

Baje Whitethorne, Sr.
(b. 1951)
The First Snowfall
1987
Painting; acrylic on mat board
15 x 22 in.
Private collection

Artists from all over the world have painted landscapes for centuries. The Navajo artist Baje Whitethorne, Sr., paints to record and remember the Navajo land where he grew up. From the time he was a little boy, Whitethorne traced pictures on the dirt floor of his family's hogan. He continued to draw during the unhappy years he spent away from home at boarding school. Although he worked in the nuclear energy industry for a while, Whitethorne has made his living for the last twenty years as an artist and children's book illustrator. He was influenced by European American artists such as Maynard Dixon but has developed his own painting techniques and themes. The First Snowfall recalls the landscape around his childhood home and the threatening clouds of winter. The work is owned by a private collector who lives in Southern California.

Other works by Baje Whitethorne, Sr. on ArtsEdNet include El Capitan [http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/P/capitan.html], Spirits in the Sky [http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/P/spirits.html], and The Everchanging Color [http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Images/P/everchang.html].

Key Artwork: The First Snowfall

Information about the Art Maker or Artwork

What can I find out about the art maker or artwork?

Art Maker

Who made the artwork? What were the circumstances of the art maker's life?

Baje Whitethorne, Sr., was born on the Navajo Nation in 1951, according to his mother's memory. He grew up living near Shonto and Black Mesa in a hogan, the traditional dwelling of the Navajo. The doorway of this hogan opened to the east, so that the family might greet the morning sun with daily prayers for harmony and beauty. More than simply a dwelling, the hogan represents the ideal physical and spiritual home, as given to the Navajo by the Holy People. According to tradition, the first hogan was built by the Holy People from the sacred minerals of abalone, turquoise, and obsidian.

Whitethorne's family herded sheep; even as a very small boy he helped in this work. His mother and aunts gathered local plants to dye the sheep's wool and spun it into yarn for the large rugs that they would weave and sell or trade at the local trading post.

As a youngster Whitethorne drew pictures in the dirt floor of the hogan. His favorite subjects were the Lone Ranger and Roy Rogers, popular western movie stars of the 1950s, who also were the subject of comic books. Later he drew Godzilla, King Kong, and warplanes. He thought he might grow up to be a cartoonist.

When he was old enough to go to school, Whitethorne was taken from his family to the Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school at Leupp, Arizona. At this time Indian children were taken away from their homes and families to schools where their hair was cut short, they were given American-style clothing, and they were not allowed to speak Navajo, their native language. Children slept in dormitories and did all the cleaning and other chores around the school. They were only allowed to go home at Christmas and summer holidays. They could not practice their Navajo religion. Whitethorne tells how hard it was to be alone, away from his family, away from his hogan, understanding no English. He drew more and more as a way of expressing himself.

At age twelve or thirteen Whitethorne went to live with a non-Indian family in Tuba City, Arizona. The life he led with this family was very different from that he experienced in his Navajo family, and so were the values. He went to church every Sunday and never had the opportunity to participate in Navajo ceremonies.

After he graduated from high school, Whitethorne attended a small Christian college to

major in education but took art classes at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, and, later, Grand Canyon College in Phoenix. For many years he worked as a boilermaker, building nuclear power plants, but his interest in art stayed with him. He studied art on his own, specializing in watercolor because of its difficult technique. He was challenged to solve problems in watercolor and to gain control over the medium.

For the last twenty years Whitethorne has made his living as a professional artist. Only in recent years has he made an effort to learn more about traditional Navajo ideas and values. He struggles to balance the two cultures in which he lives, the mainstream culture and his Navajo background. The subjects of his art increasingly reflect his Navajo roots. He has developed his own techniques for painting in a watercolor style with acrylic paint. Many of his paintings have been chosen as the poster image for various events in the Southwest. His art is collected by several individuals in the Los Angeles area. He has exhibited at the Autry Museum and there are art galleries (see Print and Electronic Resources) in the area that sell his work.

Whitethorne has also illustrated and written several children's books (see Electronic and Other Resources) that retell some of the traditional stories of the Navajo. As he has grown older he has become more interested in education. He visits many schools to share his art and teach children about art and the Navajo culture. He also maintains his own Web site.

Subject Matter

What subject matter (people, places, or things) does the artwork depict, if anything?

The First Snowfall shows a landscape in northeastern Arizona near Tuba City on Highway 160. It is based on a memory of the landscapes of Whitethorne's childhood. It shows a hogan with the doorway facing east to greet the morning sun. This is how all hogans are properly oriented. There is also a shady ramada (a lean-to that blocks the sun) where the weaving is done. A corral for the animals is made of posts from tree limbs. On the right side of the ramada there are two barrels used to store water. This homeplace is nestled at the base of imposing sandstone rock formations. In the distance are purple mesas dotted with the silhouettes of piñon trees. Overhead the sky is threatening with bands of gray clouds obscuring the blue sky overhead and the purples and oranges of sunset in the west. A light dusting of snow covers the rocks, sagebrush, and ground around the hogan.

Technical Features

How was the artwork made? (tools, materials, and processes)

Baje Whitethorne begins by using a pencil to indicate the major areas and to define the

foreground, middle ground, and background of the painting. He uses acrylic paints as if they were watercolors. He wets the sky areas of the paper and then applies layers of color diluted with water. He allows these areas to dry, then adds additional layers of color. As the colors bleed out into the wet paper, the sky areas begin to take on the effect of the ever-changing sky on the Navajo reservation. For the landforms, hogan, and other objects in the painting he uses less-diluted colors on the dry paper. He chooses brushes in a variety of widths, from very wide and soft Japanese brushes for washes to very small pointed brushes for the tiny details added later. Whitethorne paints on four-ply mat board. Its soft surface absorbs water and contributes to the ease of creating sky effects. He uses the primary colors-red, blue, and yellow-as well as black and white. From these he is able to mix all the colors he uses in his painting.

Sensory Elements

What visual elements do I see in the artwork? (line, color, shape, light and dark, texture, mass, and space)

In The First Snowfall the landforms are outlined by carefully defined lines of color. Most of these are very precise and create the sharp-edged shapes of the rocks and mesas. There are some soft and flowing outlines in the foreground and middle ground. The sagebrush in the foreground is composed of many sharp brush strokes radiating from the base of the plant. By contrast, the sky is made up of horizontal bands of varying widths.

The main colors in the painting are blues, purples, reddish browns, and dark grays. The values of these colors vary from light and bright to deep and intense. All the hues and their tints and shades are mixed from the three primary colors plus black and white.

The shapes in The First Snowfall are organic in nature. There is a lot of variety, from massive rock forms to delicate sagebrush and fence posts. Negative spaces are created between rock forms, and the overlapping of these forms gives a sense of depth.

There is a great deal of visual texture created as a result of the complex shifts of color and value; the linear definition of rocks, posts, and plants; and the variety of brush strokes used throughout the painting.

Formal Organization

How do the elements in the artwork work together? (For example, are parts repeated, balanced, emphasized, contrasted?)

A limited number of colors are repeated with variations in tint and shade. Depth is also created by the contrasts of values and colors, from lighter values in the foreground to darker values in the background. Warm reddish browns dominate the middle ground,

with cool blues and purples in the background and extreme foreground. This pattern reverses in the sky, from deep purples at the horizon to lighter blues and grays above. Here in the sky the off-white paper creates a light contrast. The snowfall on the tops of rocks and in the foreground is the white of the unpainted paper.

There is a dominant horizontal movement throughout the painting. Bands of color move across the picture plane. There is a sense of harmony in motion, which is a very important concept in Navajo art.

Reproduction

How is the reproduction (digitized or printed image) different from the original artwork? (size, angle of view, surface texture, etc.)

Viewing the original artwork, one can see the texture of the watercolor paper, the transparency of the paint, and the fine lines that define details in the painting. The reproduction is a digitized image. A photograph of the painting has been translated into pixels that can be transmitted over the Internet and viewed either on a computer monitor or printed out on a color printer. The original is fifteen-by-twenty-two inches, one-fourth the size of a full sheet of watercolor paper; the size of the reproduction is variable. The colors of the reproduction vary somewhat from the original, depending on the fidelity of the colors on the transparency from which the computer image was made and on the quality of the monitor or printer being used. The original is painted on high-quality, four-ply museum mat board made of 100% cotton rag. The surface of the off-white paper is soft and smooth, very different from the appearance of the digitized or color copy of the painting.

Condition

What condition (broken, restored, dirty) is the artwork in? How did it look when it was new?

The First Snowfall is in the same condition as it was when first painted. The work is mounted on acid-free paper. It has been framed well to protect it, and the owner has hung it out of direct sunlight, which would fade the colors of the painting. Because the owners live on the West Coast near the ocean, where it is damp, they have made sure that the artwork is sealed against moisture.

Contextual Information

What can I find out about when and where the artwork was made?

Natural Context

What is the natural environment like where the artwork was made? (for example, climate, landforms, natural resources)

For the most part, the Navajo Nation is comprised of high desert, where temperatures can shift from very hot to very cold over the course of a few hours. There is snow in the winter, but the sun usually melts it during the daytime. Spring storms bring much-needed moisture to the land. In the summer it is quite dry and the wind can blow fiercely, raising clouds of red sand into the air. The altitude is above seven thousand feet. There are canyons and plateaus, mesas and washes.

Some Navajos move with their herds of sheep from high mesas to low canyons to take advantage of favorable weather conditions at different times of the year. Juniper, piñon, and sagebrush are the main plants, although other kinds can be found as well. These are used for medicines, for dyeing wool used in weaving, and for food. Rabbits, deer, mule deer, timber wolves, coyotes, and mountain lions live in close range. Beneath the mesas are coal and uranium, much prized by utility companies. These minerals generate income for the tribe but lie beneath grazing land and sites sacred to the Navajo people. This painting very accurately portrays the landforms of the Navajo Nation. (See Print and Electronic Resources for links to maps of the Navajo Nation.)

Functional Context

How is/was the artwork used?

Baje Whitethorne paints to support his family, depicting subjects that are very meaningful to him. This painting captures memories of his childhood. He says that his work is intended to teach about Navajo life. It records the story of a time that is passing on the reservation. Although there are still many families living in traditional hogans, herding sheep, and weaving, many Navajo now live in houses with running water and electricity and have wage-earning jobs in town. Some people might use the painting to remind them of the landscape and lifestyle of the Navajo Nation.

Another use for Whitethorne's work is purely aesthetic. His paintings are considered by many to be visually pleasing. Some people respond primarily to the aesthetic qualities of the artworks.

Cultural Context

What can I determine about what people thought, believed, or did in the culture in which the artwork was made?

Traditional Navajo people lived a particular lifestyle in the past; many continue to do so

today. This lifestyle is based on the belief that they belong to the earth, not the other way around. They feel it is the responsibility of humans to protect the earth, to give back to it for everything taken from it. Traditional Navajo pray to the east each morning that they will have good thoughts and remain in harmony with their surroundings. The day is spent planting corn and squash and hoeing weeds. Food must be hunted, grown, or gathered with good intention. In earlier days there was less dependence on commercial products. People were more self-reliant. Families worked hard at home together. Now people drive to town to buy food and other products at stores.

Traditional stories still told during the wintertime convey the history of the Navajo (or Dine, as the people call themselves) and the right ways to conduct one's life. Stories guide weavers in the proper ways to undertake their weaving; stories guide potters in the correct ways to make pottery. The people are reminded of the cycles of the seasons, of the sun, and of life. There are four seasons, four directions, and four sacred mountains. The number four and the circle play important roles in the beliefs and practices of the Navajo.

Artworld Context

What can I learn about the art ideas, beliefs, and activities that were important in the culture in which the artwork was made?

Art-making activities are so much a part of Navajo life that they are hard to describe separate from the culture itself. The concept of harmony (hozho) is the foundation of Navajo philosophy. One always strives to be in harmony with the earth, with other people, and within one's own thoughts and actions. Creating beautiful things according to the proper ways set out in Navajo stories is part of nearly every family's activities. For example, small children draw. They help to gather the plants for dyeing wool, to herd the sheep that provide the wool, and to shear the wool from the sheep when it is time. Family members may make jewelry or work metal for beautiful horse trappings. Crafting and selling art objects has become a major source of income for many Navajo families.

Viewpoints for Interpretation

What can I find out about what the artwork meant to people when and where it was made and what it means to people now?

Art Maker

Why did the art maker want the artwork to look the way it does?

Baje Whitethorne wanted the artwork to look the way it does because this was home. The colors, the hills, the sky; this is how it felt to Whitethorne. He wanted to capture the

lifestyle, the natural flow of time and everyday activities, and his memories: "I know the landscape, the land, everything, as though it was yesterday. When I look at the art it remains as fresh as the day I did it. It is all personal."

According to Whitethorne: "The art is my life, my connection with Mother Earth. The hogan is built in the earth to show closeness to earth. Just looking at the hogan I see my mother carding the wool to make the weaving. I sometimes took my bed out to the corral to sleep with the sheep." (Interview with Baje Whitethorne, Sr. by the author)

Artworld Viewer

How did the person(s) for whom the artwork was made (for example, a patron, user, or other viewer of the time) understand it?

Some people who buy Baje Whitethorne's artworks were born near the Navajo Nation or their parents may have told them about the area. Other buyers may have seen and appreciated the natural landscape while on a visit and wished for a memory of it. Still others respond primarily to the style and the subject matter, purchasing the art for its aesthetic value.

Art critics have noted of Whitethorne's work:

"Orthodoxy has virtually become law in some Southwestern states, where the 'Indianness' of the arts and crafts offered at fairs is legally certified. [This] also discourages innovation. However, on the evidence of an exuberant exhibit at the National Museum of Natural History, the day of the kept craftsman is fading. The show is a wonderland of intensely original creations by four Native Americans who have not only defied the conventions of commerce, but have slipped some of the shackles of their own culture. They're not 'Indian artists,' they are artists who are Indian.

"Whitethorne paints realistic yet other-worldly landscapes in what might be called spirit-colors, hues he blends himself.... What Whitethorne paints is so manifestly true as to make this viewer doubt his own memories of the Southwestern landscape." (Burchard, 1991)

"Whitethorne is outstanding among contemporary Navajo artists. His finely detailed paintings are alive with bold rhythms of composition; rocks, canyons and trees surge upward toward vast and colorful skies; hogans, sheep pens and ramadas blend and harmonize with desert tones. When Whitethorne paints people, they move, they leap, sing, dance and climb. They are so completely in motion, they seem suspended in midair." (The Messenger, 1991)

"Although some memories are harsh, such as those of his BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) school days when the government punished children for daring to speak their native

language, and the forced abandonment of native celebrations, there is no bitterness or anger in Baje's work.

"His paintings are filled with symbols of his past and recurring themes of solitary hogans at the feet of massive sandstone cliffs, blazing endless skies, dancers and singers with unaffected joy and purpose.

"His work speaks directly to our emotions. His work is accessible to everyone, with no dripping sentimentality, no enigmas, no tricks.

"I thought about much of what passes for Indian art in the area, the wizened old sages with flowing white hair turning into wolves or eagles turning into clouds or whatever. 'I don't do that,' Baje said simply... But there is an elegant sense of spirituality in the simple silence of a lone hogan in the vast wild that feels true." (Sigman, 1997)

Cultural Understanding

How was the artwork understood within the culture in which it was made?

"Some Navajo say, 'You are commercializing, giving away the power of your culture,'" says Baje Whitethorne. "Still, lots of Navajo like it. [Navajo] artists say they really like my art. Some people like the historical value of it. Peter MacDonald, former Tribal Chairman, likes it because it was his experience, his way of life." (Interview with the author)

Some medicine men question Whitethorne's inclusion of Holy People in some of his paintings. They say that the artist places himself in danger of physical or mental illness by painting these powerful figures. They also believe that the viewer of the artwork may also be harmed. For this reason, none of Whitethorne's paintings of yeibeichai are posted here.

Connections among Artworks

What can I find out about connections between this artwork and other artworks?

Style

How does this artwork look like other artworks?

This work is typical of Baje Whitethorne's paintings in which he captures the dramatic sky and the effects of light on the landforms of the Navajo Nation. A palette of vibrant, intense colors is found in most of his artwork. The recurring landscape, as well as the hogan, corral, and ramada, is characteristic not only of his work but also that of other

artists who specialize in Navajo imagery. Many artists paint the landscape of this area. Most use a more subdued palette than Whitethorne. His sky is very reminiscent of the sky found in the artworks of Maynard Dixon.

Influence

How did earlier artworks influence this artwork? How did/might it influence later artworks?

Baje Whitethorne's artwork is influenced by the artwork of Maynard Dixon [http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Resources/Murals/Dixon/index.html] in the sense of direction and movement in the landscape, big moving clouds, a simple palette, and some abstraction in the composition. He looked to Oscar Howe for design ideas and to Harrison Begay and Beatien Yazz for their subjects and design. He likes the narrative quality of Norman Rockwell and admires Picasso for his ability to break rules, innovate, and create new art styles.

Whitethorne's approach to painting skies with acrylic washes is being employed by other artists. He teaches many workshops to young people and adults; these students may adopt elements of his technique and style in their future work.

Themes

What general ideas help connect this artwork to other artworks?

Artists have painted landscapes for centuries. The earliest landscapes are in Chinese brush paintings, where the relationship of people to nature is explored. Chinese philosophy is reflected in the grandeur of nature and the relative unimportance of people. By contrast, in European art the landscape appeared much later and was primarily the backdrop for images of people. In American art, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists glorified the landscape of the West to promote westward expansion and the philosophy of manifest destiny. Baje Whitethorne paints to recordand remember. Consistent with Navajo philosophy, in his paintings people are only one part of the earth's inhabitants, living in harmony with all other creatures, plants, and the land.

Navajo Art

Weaving as a Way of Life

Lesson Overview

Students:

- learn about the lives of Navajo weavers and the importance of weaving in the conduct of their lives
- examine the styles of Navajo weaving and consider how changes have been influenced by contact with mainstream culture
- analyze how Navajo weavers have used the repetition of visual elements to create patterns
- make a weaving demonstrating an understanding of repetition

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Objectives

1. Art History: Students identify the artists who made the key artworks and understand how being Navajo was an important factor in the creation of the artworks.

2. Art Criticism: Students describe the use of repetition by Navajo artists to create patterns.

3. Art History, Aesthetics: Students explain how the art of Navajo weavers was understood by the person(s) for whom it was made and how that understanding has influenced the work of these artists.

4. Art History, Art Criticism: Students describe how the artwork of Navajo weavers is understood within their culture.

5. Art Making: Students make an artwork using patterns based on personal or cultural ideas.

6. Art Making: Students use repetition to create patterns in their own artworks.

Preparation

Print out and read through the lesson, carefully adapting it to your teaching style and available resources. Decide which activities are most appropriate for your students. Assemble necessary resources.

Provide students large printed versions of the three weavings that are the focus of this lesson plan:

- Chief Style Blanket
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Resources/Navajo/Chief/index.html
- Pictorial Blanket
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Resources/Navajo/Pict/index.html
- Going to London
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Resources/Navajo/Begaydy/index.html

You may use a color printer or make color transparencies of the images. Read through the background information on each of these weavings. Select material you think will be appropriate to share with your students, noting especially the sections relating to the Key Questions handout for this unit. You may want to make copies for your students.

Time Requirements

Teachers who have field—tested this lesson report that it takes varying lengths of time-often several class sessions—depending on the age of the students, the style of teaching, and available resources. There are two basic activities within this lesson.

Activities: Weaving as a Way of Life

Basic Activities

- Part I: Spider Woman, the Railroad, and Weaving
- Part II: Visual Harmony in Pattern

Optional Activities

- Supplementary Weaving Activities

Assessment Guides

Basic Activity: Part I

Spider Woman, the Railroad, and Weaving

Students explain how Navajo weavers have been influenced by contact with other cultures and artworlds.

Beginner: Students identify at least one way that Navajo weavers have been influenced by contact with other cultures and artworlds.

Competent: Students identify several ways that Navajo weavers have been influenced by contact with other cultures and artworlds.

Advanced: Students identify several ways that Navajo weavers have been influenced by contact with other cultures and artworlds and explain how, over time, the artwork of Navajo weavers has reflected these influences.

Students describe the ways that the artwork of Navajo weavers is an expression of their cultural place in the world.

Beginner: Students relate some aspect of the place of weavers in Navajo culture.

Competent: Students describe several ways that weaving is an expression of important aspects of the place of weavers in Navajo culture.

Advanced: Students describe in detail many ways that weaving is an expression of important aspects of the place of weavers in Navajo culture.

Students describe ways that the artwork of Navajo weavers is an expression of the natural context in which they live.

Beginner: Students make some connection between weaving and the natural world in which Navajo weavers live.

Competent: Students describe several ways in which the artwork of Navajo weavers is an expression of the natural world in which they live.

Advanced: Students describe in detail many ways in which the artwork of Navajo weavers is an expression of the natural world in which they live.

Basic Activity: Part II
Visual Harmony in Pattern

Students describe the use of repetition by Navajo weavers to create pattern.

Beginner: Students make a limited attempt to describe the use of repetition by Navajo weavers to create pattern.

Competent: Students accurately describe the use of repetition by Navajo weavers to create pattern.

Advanced: Students accurately describe in detailed analysis the use of repetition by Navajo weavers to create a balanced, symmetrical pattern.

Students use repetition to create pattern in their own artwork.

Beginner: Students use repetition of one visual element to create a pattern.

Competent: Students use repetition of line, color, and shape to create a pattern.

Advanced: Students use repetition of line, color, and shape to create a balanced and symmetrical pattern.

Students describe how their own artwork expresses their place in the world.

Beginner: Students make an attempt to relate their pattern to their own life.

Competent: Students are able to relate their pattern to some aspect of their own life.

Advanced: Students are able to describe in detail how their design reflects their place in the world.

Computer Equipment and Facilities

Teacher Preparation:

Print out your own copy of the lesson plan. Minimally, make color printouts or color transparencies of images linked within the activities section of the lesson plan. If you have computer-display facilities, you may want to bookmark key images before class.

Classroom Instruction:

At minimum, no computer access is required. If you have Internet-connected computer-display facilities, you will be able to present images online.

Resources

Make enough sets of images of Navajo weavings for each group of four students, using such examples as Chief-Style Blanket, Pictorial Blanket, and Going to London, Navajo Blanket, and other items downloaded from sites found in Electronic and Other Resources.

- printouts of the handout Key Questions
- printouts of the handout Pattern Analysis
- printouts of the handout Self-Reflection on Weaving Design
- nine-by-twelve-inch construction paper in a variety of colors
- construction paper in a variety of colors precut into strips that are nine inches long and one, one and a half, and two inches wide
- glue
- scissors

Navajo Art

Weaving as a Way of Life

Key Questions

Your Name_____

Name of Weaving_____

1. Who made the artwork? What are/were the circumstances of her life? (ART MAKER)

2. How did the artist use repetition? (FORMAL ORGANIZATION)

3. How is/was the artwork understood within the Navajo culture? (CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING)

4. How is/was the artwork understood by the person(s) for whom it was made (for example, the trader, tourist, or collector)? (ARTWORLD VIEWER)

Navajo Art

Weaving as a Way of Life

Self-Reflection on Weaving Design Worksheet

Name_____

Date_____

What colors did you use in your design?

How do the colors repeat?

What are the major shapes you used?

In what ways do the shapes repeat?

How is the pattern of the design balanced and symmetrical?

What is the visual effect of this balanced and symmetrical pattern?

In what ways is this pattern reflective of yourself and your place in the world?

What do you like best about your pattern?

What might you do differently next time?

Navajo Art

Weaving as a Way of Life

Pattern Analysis Worksheet

Name of Recorder_____

Date_____

Names of other group members_____

_____

Identification of Weaving_____

Please discuss the weaving in your small group and record your answers to each question.

- What are the colors used in this weaving?

- How are the colors repeated?

- What are the major shapes you see?

- In what ways do the shapes repeat?

- How is the pattern of this weaving balanced and symmetrical?

- Thinking about the weaving process, where the weaver starts at the bottom of the piece and weaves one row of yarn at a time, can you predict how he or she would have developed the pattern as the weaving progressed? Where did the weaver begin to reverse the design?

- What is the visual effect of this balanced and symmetrical pattern?

Weaving as a Way of Life

Vocabulary

You may want to introduce the following vocabulary in conjunction with this lesson:

balance - a component of formal organization in which the sensory elements are arranged to create a sense of stability

batten - a flat, straight piece of wood used to hold yarn in place on a loom

card - the process of combing wool to clean & disentangle it so it can be spun into yarn

Dine (dee-NEH) - Navajo word meaning "the People"; used by the Navajo to describe themselves

hogan (ho-WAHN) - an eight-sided building that is the traditional Navajo home, also used for ceremonies

hozho (ho-ZHO) - Navajo word referring to harmony, balance, and beauty in all aspects of life

loom - the frame upon which weaving is done

motif - a main theme or design element that is repeated to create a pattern

pattern - the regular repetition of a motif

shuttle - a tool used for passing the thread of the weft between the threads of the warp

spin - to pull wool into strands of yarn using a spindle

spindle - a round disk on a stick used to spin wool into yarn

symmetry - organizing the parts of a design so that one side duplicates, or mirrors, the other

warp - the vertical threads on a loom that are covered by the weft

weaving combs - carved from wood; used to pack down the weft threads tightly as they are laid in place

weft - the horizontal threads on a loom that make the pattern of a weaving

Weaving as a Way of Life

Basic Activity: Part I
Spider Woman, the Railroad, and Weaving

Introduce to students the idea that every group of people has developed explanations for their origin. These explanations may be scientific or more literary in nature—beautiful stories that explain where "the people" came from and how they came to live in their homeland. These stories may be told by older people to younger ones; may take the form of songs, prayers, or ceremonies; and may also be written in books.

Overview Reminder:

Students:

- learn about the lives of Navajo weavers and the importance of weaving in the conduct of their lives
- examine the styles of Navajo weaving and consider how changes have been influenced by contact with mainstream culture
- analyze how Navajo weavers have used the repetition of visual elements to create patterns make a weaving demonstrating an understanding of repetition

Explain that before the time of easy transportation from one place to another, people developed somewhat different sets of beliefs, ideas, and activities that suited their way of life. Often the physical environment had a major impact on how people lived and was reflected in their beliefs.

Explain further that as people of one culture encounter people of another culture, ideas, beliefs, and activities of the cultures they adopt as a result of the encounter. Ask students to name all the different cultural groups in Los Angeles (or your local community). Ask them to identify the contributions of each named group to today's local culture. What kinds of food, clothing, celebrations, religious beliefs, social customs, or values has each group brought to the area and which have been adopted or adapted by local people?

Ask students to look back in time, to think about their own family's history. Where did their family (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc.) originally come from? Can they locate that place on a United States or world map? What do they know or can they discover about their family's origins? Are there some old family stories that are told to them, tales that tell the history of the family? Are there some mementos, photographs, or pieces of jewelry, clothing, or fabric that have been handed down from older to younger members of the family?

Ask students to take a look at their clothing and consider where the fabric came from. What is the fabric made of? Where was the clothing constructed? Where did they get the clothing? Extend this idea to anything made of fiber: bedding, window coverings, floor coverings, upholstery fabric for furniture or cars, etc. Then have the students imagine a time before there were malls for shopping, before there were factories in faraway places with machinery to weave fabric and make the clothing sold at the malls. Where did the materials for clothing come from? How were clothes made?

Introduce the Navajo people—or Dine, as they call themselves. Display a map of the Four Corners (from the Navajo Rugs of Hubbell Trading Post site) area of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah [http://navajorugs.spma.org/map.html]. In this desert area the Navajo people have lived for several hundred years. Anthropologists think that these Native Americans migrated from the far Northwest, but the Navajo believe that they came up from the earth through four worlds before arriving here in the fifth world, in an area roughly corresponding to the Navajo Nation, or reservation. (See Electronic and Other Resources for maps, photos, and general information about the physical environment and background of the Navajo people.) See also the Natural Context section for:

- Chief Style Blanket
- Pictorial Blanket
- Going to London

The Navajo are one of over seven hundred Native American tribes that live in North America. Many Navajo live on their reservation in the Southwest. They are people whose stories have been transmitted through story, song, and image. Their culture is embodied in a variety of art forms, including weaving and painting. Many families earn much of their income from making and selling various kinds of art. In fact, the ideas of beauty and harmony are central to Navajo beliefs about life.

The Navajo have had contact with many other cultural groups for several hundred years. Along with other tribes, they encountered the Spanish nearly two hundred years ago. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the railroad passed through the Southwest, bringing tourists and traders and having a major influence on Navajo art. Contact with the ideas, beliefs, technologies, and art markets of other groups has led to changes in Navajo art and culture.

Weaving is part of the way of life for many Navajo people, even today. It is an integral part of their culture. To learn about Navajo beliefs with regard to the origins of weaving, have students read and discuss "The Legend of the Loom" told by Sarah Natani and illustrated by Baje Whitethorne, Sr. (published in Jill Max, ed. [1997]. Spider Spins a Story. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing). This is just one of many stories about how Spider Woman brought weaving to the Navajo. Other versions may be found in Electronic and Other Resources.

You might ask students to speculate on the reasons why variations of the story exist. Remind them of the game where the first person in a group whispers something to another person who then whispers the message to another person and so on. The version reported by the last person in the group may vary substantially from the original statement. This often happens in the oral tradition of storytelling and helps to explain how Spider Woman stories may differ from one part of the reservation to another.

Discussion questions after reading might include:

- Why might learning to weave have been valuable to the Navajo people? (to have clothing and blankets to keep warm)
- What role does White Shell Woman play in the weaving process?
- Who made the first loom?
- What are the parts of the loom meant to represent?
- What is the importance of one's thoughts while weaving?
- Do you think that this story is important to Navajo weavers today? How?

Divide students into groups, giving each group a reproduction of one of the weavings that you have printed out and the background information that goes with it. Have students examine the weaving, read and discuss the questions and answers, and then complete the Key Questions handout. If students cannot read all of the background information, they may focus on the Art Maker, Cultural Understanding, and Artworld Viewer sections to complete the Key Questions handout.

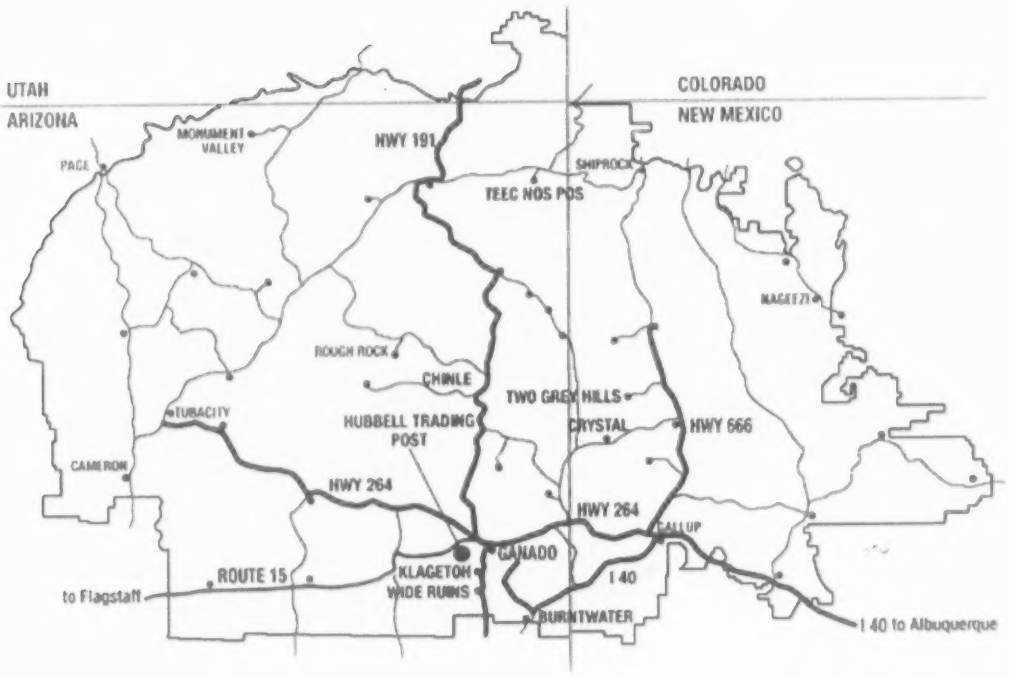
Discuss the findings:

- What was the role of "traditional" women in Navajo culture? Has that role changed over time?
- Besides weaving, what did/does a Navajo woman do during her day?
- Why does a weaver weave?
- How important is weaving to many Navajo families?
- Where do ideas for weavings come from?
- Where do the materials for weaving come from?
- What influence did/do traders at trading posts have on Navajo weaving?
- What influence did the arrival of the train have on Navajo weaving?
- What other mainstream influences have led to changes in Navajo weaving?
- What do traders and buyers look for in a weaving?
- What outside influence is each of these weavings an example of?

Finally, have each student write a short paper responding to the questions above. This paper will be used for assessment.

Using printouts or photocopies of photos, maps, and rugs from online or print sources and the students' short captions based on their handouts, create a bulletin board on Navajo Life and Weaving.

Map of Navajo Country



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Weaving as a Way of Life

Basic Activity: Part II
Visual Harmony in Pattern

Introduce to students the concept of repetition as a way of creating visual harmony. In artworks, patterns are created through the repetition of visual elements such as line, shape, color, or a single motif. In music, harmony is the result of repeating certain notes, themes, or refrains. Stories often have repeated elements that make them easier to remember and that establish a pattern to the events being related. In our lives, we establish patterns of events that shape our days and bring some sense of harmony through the repetition of certain activities.

Overview Reminder:

Students:

- learn about the lives of Navajo weavers and the importance of weaving in the conduct of their lives
- examine the styles of Navajo weaving and consider how changes have been influenced by contact with mainstream culture
- analyze how Navajo weavers have used the repetition of visual elements to create patterns make a weaving demonstrating an understanding of repetition

The natural world is a rich source of pattern. The cycles of seasons, the course of the day from dawn to dark, and the forms of leaves and seashells are only a few examples of natural patterns. Students can brainstorm about the kinds of repetition that they notice in the visual, auditory, natural, and built environment. Ask students to give examples of pattern in their everyday activities at school, home, etc.

Explain that for Navajo weavers the creation of a pattern through the repetition of visual elements is not only a set of artistic choices but also a reflection of the cycles of the seasons, the course of the sun through the sky each day, and the songs, prayers, and chants the weaver knows and says before and during her weaving. Each weaver also expresses a personal sense of design in the weaving. There are no two weavings that are exactly alike, just as in nature no two snowflakes are identical. However, in general, principles of symmetry prevail. A weaving usually exhibits a mirror symmetry from the center point of the work. The weaver develops the design in the first half of the weaving process, then repeats the design of the first half in reverse to complete the pattern.

Display the Chief-Style Blanket and model an analysis of the pattern, using questions like the following:

- What are the colors used in this blanket? (white, black, and red)
- How are the colors repeated? (in a regular pattern in bands or stripes and within the stepped diamond shapes)
- What are the major shapes you see? (the stepped diamond shape and parts of that
- shape)
- In what ways do the shapes repeat? (they are distributed in a regular repetition from the central motif to the parts of the diamond at the corners and edges of the blanket)
- How is the pattern of this blanket balanced and symmetrical? (the patterns and shapes are repeated and mirrored in lines along the blanket)
- Thinking about the weaving process, where the weaver starts at the bottom of the piece and weaves one row of yarn at a time, can you predict how she would have developed the pattern as the weaving progressed? Where did the weaver begin to reverse the design? (at the middle point)
- What is the visual effect of this balanced and symmetrical pattern? (stability, harmony, calm)

Distribute sets of reproductions of Navajo weavings to groups of about four students. One student should be responsible for recording the answers of his or her group for one weaving on the handout Pattern Analysis. When the students have finished with their analysis, display each reproduction with its analysis sheet. Ask each group to share the major conclusions it drew from the analysis of the weaving. Make a list or chart of the characteristics shared by all three weavings.

Tell students that they will be making their own cut-paper weaving designs. Students will select a piece of nine-by-twelve-inch construction paper in the color of their choice to use as a background. In addition, they will choose several pairs of cut strips. Ask students to think about how their choice of colors and patterns might reflect their ideas about their place in the natural or physical world. The criteria for a successful design include:

- repeating line, shape, and color
- establishing a balanced, symmetrical pattern
- creating an arrangement that reflects the student's place in the natural or physical world

Demonstrate to students how, by folding the pairs of strips together into fourths or eighths lengthwise and cutting through all the layers of paper, a repeated pattern can be made that is identical for each pair of strips. Ask students to unfold the strips and see the kind of design they have cut.

After the students have made a variety of strips in differing patterns and widths, they can experiment with placing the strips on the background until they are satisfied that the pattern is balanced and symmetrical. Then they may glue down the strips. Students

may also want to cut out additional shapes to place on their weaving design. These shapes should also repeat in the pattern.

After the weaving designs are completed, display them and discuss the variety of design solutions. Ask students to complete the handout Self-Reflection on Weaving Design. Assess student learning using the Assessment Guides.

Optional Activity
Supplementary Weaving Activities

Depending upon the age and experience of your students, there are many additional weaving activities that may be undertaken in the classroom. These include designing weaving patterns on graph paper, weaving on cardboard looms, or using a computer program for weaving designs. More-advanced students might weave a Navajo style rug on an upright frame loom.

Many excellent ideas for supplementary activities related to Navajo weaving can be found on ArtsEdNet for elementary, middle school, and high school students.

Overview Reminder:

Students:

- learn about the lives of Navajo weavers and the importance of weaving in the conduct of their lives
- examine the styles of Navajo weaving and consider how changes have been influenced by contact with mainstream culture
- analyze how Navajo weavers have used the repetition of visual elements to create patterns make a weaving demonstrating an understanding of repetition

Optional Resources

- cardboard or wooden frame looms
- yarn in various colors
- battens, combs, shuttles
- computer programs for weaving or beading on a loom

Navajo Art

Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing

Lesson Overview

Students:

- learn about the beliefs and activities of traditional Navajo medicine men and the importance of what they do within the Navajo culture
- consider whether or not sacred images should be reproduced and used for commercial purposes

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Objectives

1. Social Studies: Students describe the role of the medicine man in Navajo culture.

2. Social Studies: Students describe the purposes for which sandpaintings are made.

3. Art History: Students understand that the symbols and images of the Navajo Holy People have been used by artists in sandpaintings and art forms other than sandpaintings.

4. Art Making, Aesthetics, Ethics: Students decide whether or not sandpaintings should be reproduced or the images used in other art forms such as weavings and paintings.

Preparation

Read through the lesson, carefully adapting it to your teaching style and available resources. Decide which activities are most appropriate for your students. Assemble necessary resources.

Print copies of appropriate information about Sandpainting for student use.

Time Requirements

Teachers who have field-tested this lesson report that it takes varying lengths of time—often several class sessions-depending on the age of the students, the style of teaching, and available resources. There is one basic activity within this lesson.

Activities: Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing

Basic Activities

- Exploring Tradition

Optional Activities

- Creation Stories Explain Our Origins
- Using Sand as a Medium for Making Art

Assessment Guides

Basic Activity
Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing

Students describe the role of the medicine man in Navajo culture.

Beginner: Students give a limited or naive description of the role of the medicine man.

Competent: Students have a basic understanding of the role of the medicine man.

Advanced: Students describe in detail the role of the medicine man in preserving Navajo history and culture and in healing.

Students describe the purposes for which sandpaintings are made.

Beginner: Students give a limited or naive description of the purposes for sandpaintings.

Competent: Students accurately describe the purposes for which sandpaintings are made.

Advanced: Students describe accurately and in detail the purposes for which sandpaintings are made.

Students decide whether or not sandpaintings should be reproduced or the images used in other art forms such as weavings and paintings.

Beginner: Students give limited or poorly supported reasons for their decision.

Competent: Students give good reasons for their decision.

Advanced: Students give good reasons that are supported with evidence for their decision.

Computer Equipment and Facilities

Teacher Preparation:

Print out your own copy of the lesson plan. Minimally, make color printouts or color transparencies of images linked within the activities section of the lesson plan. If you have computer-display facilities, you may want to bookmark key images before class.

Classroom Instruction:

At minimum, no computer access is required. If you have Internet-connected computer-display facilities, you will be able to present images online.

Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing

Resources

Printouts of information on Sandpainting

Printouts of the handout What Navajo Artists and Medicine Men Say about Sandpainting

Printouts of the handout The Role of Sandpainting and the Medicine Man in Navajo Culture

What Navajo Artists and Medicine Men and Women Say about Sandpainting

In February 1997 two meetings between Navajo artists and medicine men and women were held at Greyhills Academy High School in Tuba City, Arizona. Alan Jim, art teacher at Greyhills, proposed the idea for these meetings and conducted them. At these meetings there were lengthy discussions about sandpaintings and the use of sacred images in the work of artists. Here are some quotes from those meetings. After reading the quotes, identify the similarities and differences among the stated opinions and try to account for the differences in the viewpoints. What ideas and values are being conveyed through the statements of the individuals? Consider how their viewpoints affect your own ideas about sandpainting.

Medicine man Roy Walters, Sr.

> "I think ... the word beauty ... is very universal to us, to us medicine people.... [E]verything we communicate with it is always in the Beauty Way.... It has been expressed in a certain way that you can feel it, actually feel it, you know, in yourself.
>
> "My father was a medicine man and before I started I learned everything I had from him. And so, for me, this is a great feeling. And this is what an artist will do with his art. If he doesn't have a feeling—we medicine people, we are the same way. We try to bring across a daydream, a story that probably took place, you know. I read a book called the Odyssey by Homer. The epic that happened over there is almost like the Navajo story. I kept comparing the two and it was quite an art the way it was put together. And a lot of times I would compare the book and with other religions and certain things would happen, the way the story is written. And it's, I guess, what an art is, when a person is trying to bring something across to the people. And with art, our ceremonies, we try to paint a picture of something that actually happened. And this is our ceremony that is very closely related to art."

Cultural preservationist Harris Francis

> "I work with medicine men lots and elders and they tell me stories pertaining to the land—sacred places. And then they tell me, 'My son, this what I told you, don't share with anyone else. Don't tell what I have told

you to other people—to non-Navajos—because they are going to take my powers. They are going to take. I don't want them to learn my stories.... Is it appropriate for us Navajos, for Indians to be drawing sacred images like what my brother said, sandpaintings, and then selling them to non-Indians to make a life? Is that appropriate for us Indians? Because the medicine men tell me, 'Don't give our culture away.' Because you see a lot of Navajo stories are printed in books and distributed all over the United States. And a lot of my elders tell me this is why we are losing a lot of our kids nowadays. Because our culture has gone out to non-Navajos."

Medicine man Roy Walters, Sr.

"I think a person, an artist ... should really respect what you do and that includes your religion or whatever your beliefs are. I think this is one of the choices that we have to make our own selves. And we have to do, whatever we do, do it the best way we can. Thank you."

Medicine man Daniel Peaches

"I think Frank Isaac clearly stated that there are certain objects that are sacred and that shouldn't be reproduced. And in one of the pictures that was presented, the sacred object was portrayed. So that doesn't become a regular artistic thing, but a sacrilege."

Artist Shonto Begay

"I have never done sandpainting because as a child, son of a medicine man, I grew up making sandpaintings, helping to create sandpaintings, and I grew up to respect them very much and fear them, so out of respect and—as much as I'm exposed to them—I really don't understand them still. And the more I do know, the more questions arise, so I just don't do it.... And I do get from fellow artists, 'I do sandpaintings. I sell them because I'm allowed to do it because I've gone through ceremonies or I've altered certain parts,' but still sandpaintings are to me, very, very holy, very much powerful, so it (their arguments) don't hold water with me. I do have trouble with this being used in a commercial sense.... The point is it trivializes our religion, so I have a problem with this."

Medicine woman and potter Faye Tso

"Again, like Yeis [figures of Holy People] this is very precarious, reproducing sandpaintings, because a person could become ill and not so good things could happen to them. So only those people who are blessed, and allowed through some initiation can do those things without fear of having these illnesses."

Medicine man Frank Isaac

> "[Individuals] have their own rights. And why you have a lot of these things going on.... The sandpainting is really an important thing for your art. It is part of traditional ways of life and song. These sandpainting designs are going with tradition and song, for the healing purpose only. Not exactly the copy that you show. You probably saw a little of that one, your sandpainting with a ceremony, like that.... Even the mark on your face, the deal to play warrior, that is against our philosophy, our religion. So you cannot do this. The only time you can do this is when you have a ceremony done. So if you are a painter, or an artist, or whoever you are here, the artist—what you do is good."

Medicine woman and potter Faye Tso

> "An image like this cannot be trivialized. It cannot be done casually. It's at the very core of our ceremony. It's a healing ceremony. The Yeis dancing, the patient there. One has to undergo this in order to become a medicine man or to know about the culture, the ceremony, on a deeper level. Therefore, ... in order to view it one must view it with great reverence. And to do it as an illustration, a painting of it, one has to have undergone a ceremony, a healing with Yeis like this, in order to be allowed to duplicate these motions, these dancers, lest the person fall ill, fall victim to spiritual contamination and they would have to go through a very expensive ceremony to right that."

The Role of Sandpainting and the Medicine Men and Women in Navajo Culture Worksheet

1. Describe the role of the medicine man in Navajo culture.

2. Why are sandpaintings done in traditional Navajo culture?

3. Should sandpaintings be reproduced or their images used in other art forms such as weavings and paintings? Why or why not? Give good reasons.

Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing

Vocabulary

hataathli (ha-TAHT-lee) - medicine men and women who are trained in healing and communicating with sacred spirits

' iikaah (ee-EE-kah) - the Navajo word for sandpainting It means "the place where the gods come and go."

yeibeichai (YAY-beh-shay) - spirits with influence over the natural and human worlds

Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing

Basic Activity
Exploring Tradition

Overview Reminder:

Students:

- learn about the beliefs and activities of traditional Navajo medicine men and the importance of what they do within the Navajo culture
- consider whether or not sacred images should be reproduced and used for commercial purposes

Introduce this lesson by asking students if there is anything that they have or know of that is so special that they would not want other people to see, touch, or even know about it. This might be a favorite toy, family treasure, or photograph of a loved one or something related to a special occasion, ceremony, or religious practice.

Ask students what might cause them to keep this thing private. Perhaps it is valuable and might be broken. Perhaps it has special meaning that might be misunderstood by someone unfamiliar with the reasons behind its meaning. Perhaps someone who doesn't understand how special the item is might not appreciate your feelings for it or might make fun of you for treasuring it.

Explain that scientists and scholars have often studied people from other cultures and collected objects from them. Anthropologists, for example, in an effort to understand how the religious practices of people shape their beliefs and activities, have collected things that were never intended to be shared with outsiders. These items are often exhibited without explanation of their cultural context and are appreciated more for their aesthetic qualities than for their important cultural purposes. This is the case with African masks and Northwest Coast totem poles, which are regarded as art, despite the fact that some masks are used for sacred purposes and totem poles play a role in the social organization of Northwest Coast clan structures. Navajo sandpaintings are also an example of this.

Refer to Considering Meaning and Purpose for an activity that can be adapted for this lesson. The examples and questions in this activity should prompt good discussion.

Distribute student copies of information about Sandpainting. Divide the class into groups of about four students. Ask each group to read and report on one section: Information about the Art Maker or Artwork, Contextual Information, Viewpoints for Interpretation, or Connections among Artworks. For additional sources of information on Navajo religion,

culture, and sandpainting refer to Electronic and Other Resources.

Students should pay particular attention to the role that the Navajo medicine man plays in Navajo culture, such as healing through ceremonies that include the making of sandpaintings, preserving the traditional culture through the oral transmission of stories of Navajo history, counseling with people to help solve physical and emotional problems, and teaching the traditional ways to young people. Students should be able to describe the purposes for which sandpaintings are made.

Distribute student copies of the handout What Navajo Artists and Medicine Men and Women Say about Sandpainting. You may want to assign individual sections to groups of two students, asking them to think about why the individual, whether an artist or medicine man, might hold a particular view. What values might that individual hold that contributes to his or her views?

After groups have shared their information on sandpainting and its role in Navajo history and healing, discuss whether or not artists should use the symbols or images of the Holy People (yeibeichais) in commercial sandpaintings, paintings, or weavings. Ask students to support their opinions with good reasons, remembering that respecting the traditions of others is an important part of understanding diversity. Taking the part of individuals with varying viewpoints, students might debate with each other the reasons why sandpaintings should or should not be shown in the classroom and used in making art.

Following the class discussion, each student should complete the handout The Role of Sandpainting and the What Navajo Artist and Medicine Men Have to Say about Sandpainting. Have students write a short essay explaining whether or not they think images from sandpaintings should be shown in the classroom and used in making art.

Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing

Optional Activity
Creation Stories Explain Our Origins

Overview Reminder:

Students:

- learn about the beliefs and activities of traditional Navajo medicine men and the importance of what they do within the Navajo culture
- consider whether or not sacred images should be reproduced and used for commercial purposes

Many creation stories have been told in cultures all around the world. After reading a selection of creation myths, have students identify the similarities and differences among the stories. Ask them to speculate on why there might be differences. For example, Northwest Coast stories include the people emerging from mist (reminiscent of the fogs on the Northwest Coast) while stories from the desert Southwest do not mention water. Students can write their own creation stories, taking into account the identified similarities and incorporating regional elements or imaginative components of their own.

Sandpainting: Traditions of History and Healing

Optional Activity
Using Sand as a Medium for Making Art

Overview Reminder:

Students:

- learn about the beliefs and activities of traditional Navajo medicine men and the importance of what they do within the Navajo culture
- consider whether or not sacred images should be reproduced and used for commercial purposes

The medicine man Frank Isaac tells of training young people to help him make sandpaintings during ceremonies by having them make images of everyday things as they learn to control the sand. While avoiding the use of sacred images, your students can make sandpaintings using the subject matter of their choice. They will need to practice drizzling the sand between their thumb and forefingers to make fine lines and to fill in designs. They can draw a simple image on sandpaper, cardboard, or Masonite squares of between six and twelve inches. They can outline one object at a time with white glue, then drizzle sand over the glue. Allow the outlines to dry, then fill in objects with glue and add sand.

Navajo Art

Painting as Ceremony and Cultural Expression

Lesson Overview

Students:

- learn about the lives of several Navajo artists and about the ways that these artists have been influenced by their contact with other cultures and artworlds
- examine the art of painters who express their cultural place in the world
- analyze how Navajo painters have used the repetition of design elements to create movement
- make a painting expressing their own place in the world

Objectives

1. Art History, Art Criticism: Students understand how being Navajo has been an important factor in the artwork of Harrison Begay and Baje Whitethorne, Sr.

2. Art Criticism: Students describe the use of repetition to create movement.

3. Art History, Aesthetics: Students explain how the work of Navajo artists is understood by the person(s) for whom it is/was made (teacher, patron, or collector) and how that has influenced the work of these artists.

4. Art History, Art Criticism: Students describe how the artwork of Navajo artists is understood within their culture.

5. Art Making: Students make an artwork expressing their place in the world.

6. Art Making: Students use repetition to create movement in their own artwork.

Preparation

Read through the lesson, carefully adapting it to your teaching style and available resources. Decide which activities are most appropriate for your students. Assemble

necessary resources.

Provide color copies of Navajo Horse Race and The First Snowfall for student use. Read through the information on the two paintings and select the appropriate sections to copy or adapt for student use.

Time Requirements

Teachers who have field-tested this lesson report that it takes varying lengths of time—often several class sessions—depending on the age of the students, the style of teaching, and available resources. There are two basic activities within this lesson.

Activities: Painting as Ceremony and Cultural Expression

Basic Activities

- Part I: Navajo Painters Share Their World
- Part II: Painting to Share Your World

Optional Activities

- See Getty lesson -Mexican American Murals: Making a Place in the World
  http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Resources/Murals/Theme/index.html

Assessment Guides

Basic Activity: Part I
Navajo Painters Share Their World

Students explain how Navajo artists have been influenced by contact with the mainstream culture and its artworld.

Beginner: Students identify at least one way that Navajo artists have been influenced by contact with other cultures and artworlds.

Competent: Students identify several ways that Navajo artists have been influenced by contact with other cultures and artworlds.

Advanced: Students identify several ways that Navajo artists have been influenced by contact with other cultures and artworlds and explain how, over time, the artwork of Navajo artists has reflected these influences.

Students describe ways that the artwork of Navajo artists is an expression of their cultural place in the world.

Beginner: Students give at least one example of how the artists express their cultural place in the world.

Competent: Students give several examples of how the artists express their cultural place in the world.

Advanced: Students give several detailed examples of how the artists express their cultural place in the world.

Students describe ways that the artwork of Navajo artists is an expression of their physical place in the world.

Beginner: Students give at least one example of how the artists express their physical place in the world.

Competent: Students give several examples of how the artists express their physical place in the world.

Advanced: Students give several detailed examples of how the artists express their physical place in the world.

Students describe the use of repetition by Navajo artists to create movement.

Beginner: Students make a limited attempt to describe the use of repetition to create a sense of movement.

Competent: Students accurately describe the use of repetition to create a sense of movement.

Advanced: Students accurately describe in detailed analysis the use of repetition to create a sense of movement.

Basic Activity: Part II
Painting to Share Your World

Students make an artwork expressing their physical place in the world.

Beginner: Students make an attempt to describe how their painting reflects their world.

Competent: Students are able to effectively describe how their painting reflects their world.

Advanced: Students are able to describe in detail how their painting reflects their world.

Students use repetition to create a sense of movement in their own artwork.

Beginner: Students use repetition of one visual element to create a sense of movement.

Competent: Students use repetition of line and shape to create a sense of movement.

Advanced: Students use repetition of line, color, and shape to create a sense of movement.

Computer Equipment and Facilities

Teacher Preparation:

Print out your own copy of the lesson plan. Minimally, make color printouts or color transparencies of images linked within the activities section of the lesson plan. If you have computer-display facilities, you may want to bookmark key images before class.

Classroom Instruction:

At minimum, no computer access is required. If you have Internet-connected computer-display facilities, you will be able to present images online.

Painting as Ceremony and Cultural Expression

Resources

- reproductions of Navajo Horse Race and The First Snowfall OR Internet-connected computer-display facilities
- printouts of the handout Comparing Navajo Horse Race and The First Snowfall
- printouts of the handout Self-Reflection on "Share Your World" Painting
- acrylic paints in red, yellow, blue, and black
- paper or Styrofoam plates for palettes
- watercolor brushes in a variety of sizes, including wide brushes
- watercolor paper cut to nine by twelve inches (or the size you prefer)
- cardboard sheets cut larger than the watercolor paper
- masking tape
- paper towels
- water containers
- construction paper in deep colors
- scissors
- glue

Comparing Navajo Horse Race and The First Snowfall Worksheet

Your Name_____

1. In what ways are the lives of Harrison Begay and Baje Whitethorne similar and different? What role has being a Navajo played in the artwork of each artist? How has each artist shared his world with you? (ART MAKER)

2. Compare the two artists' use of repetition to create a sense of movement. (FORMAL ORGANIZATION)

3. Describe how the artists' work is understood within the Navajo culture. (CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING)

4. Compare the ways that the artists' work is understood outside the Navajo culture. (ARTWORLD VIEWER)

Self-Reflection on "Share Your World" Painting Worksheet

Name_____

Date_____

1. What colors did you use in your design?

2. How do the colors repeat?

3. What are the major shapes you used?

4. In what ways do the shapes repeat?

5. How did you create a sense of movement?

6. In what ways is this painting reflective of yourself and your place in the world?

7. What do you like best about your painting?

8. What might you do differently next time?

Vocabulary

You may want to introduce the following vocabulary in conjunction with this lesson:

collage - a composition in which such materials as paper, cloth, and wood are glued to a background

opaque - paint that is dense enough to completely cover the background surface

organic - related to the growing, natural environment; not geometric and regular in shape or form

positive/negative space - the relationship of the positive shapes of objects in a composition to the shapes created in the area around those objects

stylized - simplified, in which details have been reduced in number and complexity

transparent - paint that is thin enough to allow the background surface to show through

value - the lightness or darkness of a color, created by adding white to make tints of color or black to make shades of color

Painting as Ceremony and Cultural Expression

Basic Activity: Part I
Navajo Painters Share Their World

If you have taught the two previous lessons in Navajo Art: A Way of Life, then your students know something about Navajo culture and have learned about the first kind of Navajo painting —sandpainting. Students will now learn more about the kinds of paintings that Navajo artists have been doing in the twentieth century and will become aware of how influences from the mainstream artworld have shaped the artwork of Navajo artists, even as they have continued to record their cultural heritage and the natural world in which they have lived.

Overview Reminder:

Students:

- learn about the lives of several Navajo artists and about the ways that these artists have been influenced by their contact with other cultures and artworlds
- examine the art of painters who express their cultural place in the world
- analyze how Navajo painters have used the repetition of design elements to create movement
- make a painting expressing their own place in the world

Display the reproduction of Navajo Horse Race. Ask students to answer the following questions:

- What is the subject of this painting? What is uniquely Navajo about the subject?
- What kinds of shapes has the artist used in his painting?
- What colors has he used? Why might he have chosen these colors?
- Which visual elements has he repeated? How does this create a sense of movement?
- What do you notice about the background of the painting?
- What was the artist showing us about Navajo life?
- What can you learn about the artist by looking at his painting?

Following this discussion, distribute the handout of selections from Navajo Horse Race. Ask students to read in particular the Art Maker, Viewpoints for Interpretation, and Influence sections.

Ask students to report on what they have discovered from their reading about the influence that Dorothy Dunn had on Harrison Begay and other students at the Santa Fe Indian School. What other circumstances of his life have influenced his art? In what

ways does he share his world with us?

After completing work on Navajo Horse Race, follow the same procedures for The First Snowfall. Ask students to answer the same set of questions as used for Begay; distribute the handouts of selections from The First Snowfall; have students read in particular the Art Maker, Viewpoints for Interpretation, and Influence sections; and ask students to report on what they have learned from their reading about Baje Whitethorne and the major influences on his art. In what ways does he share his world with us?

Next, ask students to compare and contrast Navajo Horse Race with The First Snowfall by completing the handout Comparing Navajo Horse Race and The First Snowfall. Discuss conclusions as a class. Use the students' handouts for assessment.

Basic Activity: Part II
Painting to Share Your World

Begin by telling students that they will be making a painting to share their world with others. Ask students to consider their physical place in the world. Have them write a short paragraph including all the things they see in the landscape around them, at school and at home. They may take notes as they travel from home to school and back, recording the colors of the sky and land and describing the kinds of plants, animals, people, etc., that they see. Ask students to record what they observe on the horizon. Do they see hills, the ocean, freeways, fields, houses, or tall buildings? Encourage students to make quick sketches of the basic landscape/cityscape around them.

Overview Reminder:

Students:

- learn about the lives of several Navajo artists and about the ways that these artists have been influenced by their contact with other cultures and artworlds
- examine the art of painters who express their cultural place in the world
- analyze how Navajo painters have used the repetition of design elements to create movement
- make a painting expressing their own place in the world

Discuss with students how the things that surround them—both natural and built—influence them in many ways. For example, students may be surrounded by freeways and cars, which affects their freedom to roam safely in their neighborhood. Other factors may also contribute to a need to stay close to home. Students' moods may be affected by the way the sky looks—bright and sunny with patches of clouds, streaked with pinks and purples at sunset, or foggy and overcast. Unlike the two Navajo artists, most students do not spend their time after school herding sheep or doing chores outside. Ask students the following questions:

- Are there open spaces in their neighborhood in which to play or do they play inside or outside at home?
- Where do they and their peers spend time?
- How might that influence what they want to share with others about their world?

Allow students time to think about what they could include in their paintings to share their world with others.

Demonstrate the painting technique of Baje Whitethorne to students. Assemble needed

materials.

- Begin by taping a piece of watercolor paper to a slightly larger piece of cardboard.
- Have brushes of several sizes available, along with a container of water, paper towels, and a palette with nickel-sized dots of each of the three primary colors and black.
- Dampen the watercolor paper by brushing it with a wash of clear, clean water. Then, mixing desired sky colors on your palette, freely brush them over the paper, leaving some areas white.
- Experiment with colors, layering them until the desired effect is achieved.

(NOTE: You will certainly want to experiment with this prior to working with students and have several teacher samples ready.) Explain to students that later they will be cutting from colored construction paper a silhouette of their skyline to glue over the painted sky.

The criteria for a successful finished painting include:

- repeating line, shape, and color
- creating a sense of movement
- expressing something about the student's place in the world

Distribute materials to students. Be sure that they each have ample space to work. They will be experimenting with sky effects and trying to capture a sense of atmospheric movement. When each student has had an opportunity to make several washes that create dramatic sky effects, put the works aside to dry.

On a sheet of construction paper, in the dark color of their choice, have students draw a silhouette of the skyline that they see every day. Students then cut out the silhouette and position it over their painting, gluing it down in the most pleasing arrangement.

After the paintings are completed, post the criteria, display the paintings, and discuss the variety of ways students have met the criteria. Ask students to complete the handout Self-Reflection on "Share Your World" Painting.

Assess student learning using the Assessment Guides.